THE NEW WAVE OF BASS PLAYERS **REVEALED INSIDE!**

Bass Guitar

LEE SKLAR
reveals the secret behind every great gig

DARRYL JONES

How to get the Rolling Stones' planet-sized bass tones!

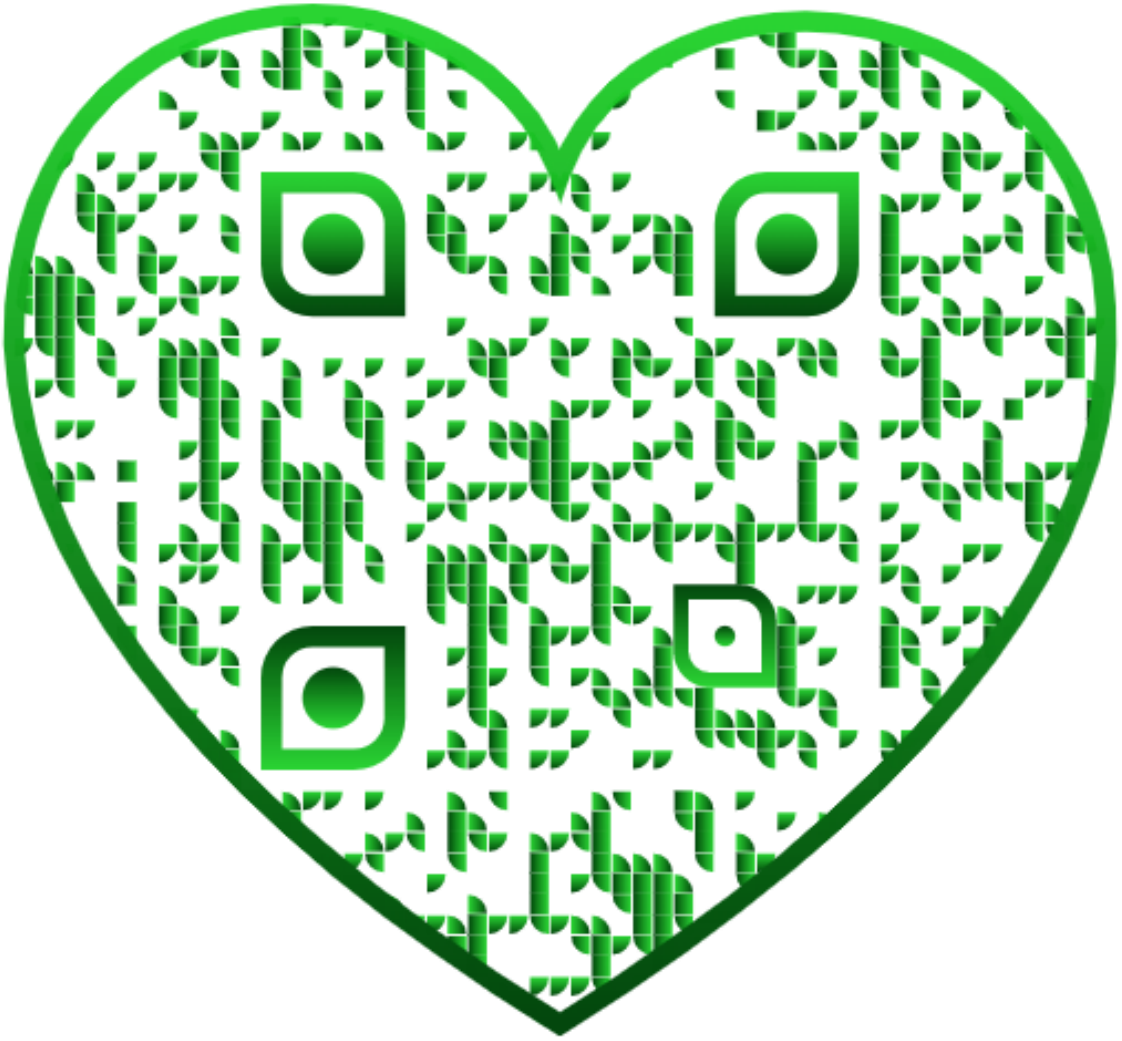
FENDER VS. GIBSON
The inside story of the ultimate bass war

LENA ABÉ
My Dying Bride's monster bass parts unpacked

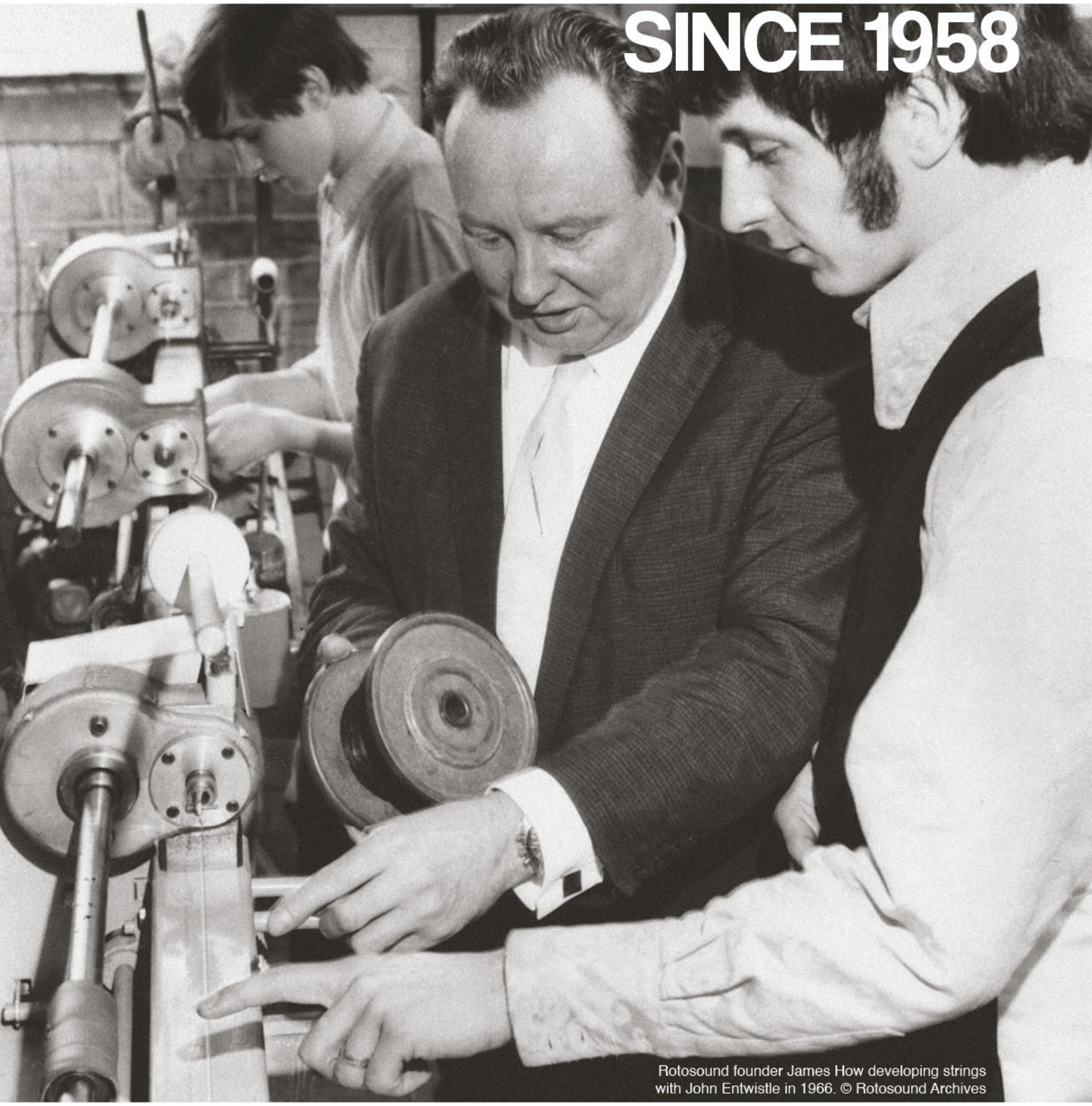
JON MOODY
GHS strings specialist speaks

NEW GEAR EXCLUSIVE
First review of **Ashdown** Grail and Saint

FUTURE



MAKING HISTORY SINCE 1958



Rotosound founder James How developing strings with John Entwistle in 1966. © Rotosound Archives

Legendary tone starts with authentic strings. That's why we're still using the same machinery that made the world's first roundwound Swing Bass strings for The Who's John Entwistle back in 1966.

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I play FUNK
I play R&B
I play JAZZ"
Nik West
Vocalist | Bassist | Producer
LITTLE BASS THING
used with light weight
OBC112
Bass Cabinets
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ISSUE 182 JUNE 2020

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The argument about which rock band is the biggest in the world has been going on for decades – but in terms of sheer cultural weight and stadium presence, we reckon that the Rolling Stones take the crown in 2020. With that in mind, we're absolutely delighted to welcome the mighty Darryl Jones to our cover, a bassist with incredible stories to tell and a relaxed attitude to fame and fortune from which we can all learn. Elsewhere, dig into our historic run-down of Fender versus Gibson, our interviews with Lee Sklar, Lena Abé, Jon Moody and the eight up-and-coming bass players in our new First Bass section. Read the results of our road-tests of amazing Ibanez, Ashdown, Trickfish, Darkglass and Hamstead gear, and absorb the wisdom of our state-of-the-art bass tuition section. All of bass life is here, even in these strange times.

On which note, you may have noticed that this issue is a tad shorter than the magazine you're used to. Blame the coronavirus: we've had to downsize because we don't know how many copies will make it into the stores. We're making it anyway, because you deserve it. We suggest you take full advantage of our digital and subscription offers; there's no reason why you should miss out just because you're stuck indoors. Enjoy this issue, and remember to wash your hands before you pick up a bass. We'll get through this – and we'll still be playing the world's coolest instrument on the other side. See you in June!

Joel McIver, Editor

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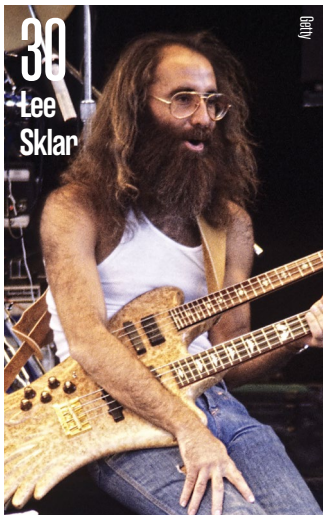

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THE LOWDOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

FAB GEAR

Fender's American Original Series was launched in 2018 and included 11 electric guitars and basses in 13 different colours. The venerable company has just announced additions to the range in the form of an Aztec Gold 50s Precision and a Vintage White 70s Jazz. As a press release runs, "Like all American Original models, the new guitars and basses are inspired by some of Fender's most-successful 50s, 60s and 70s designs and include vintage-style hardware, vintage-tall frets, body radii and neck shapes, lacquer finishes, original-spec pickups and vintage-style cases."

In other Fender news, the new Made In Japan Heritage Series has been announced under the guidance of Mark Kendrick, one of the Fender Custom Shop's founding master builders and the company's current Director of Global Build Standards. The new range, available in Japan only, includes Heritage 50s and 60s Precision and Heritage 60s and 70s Jazz models.

All instruments feature historically accurate specs, tones and colours, combined with "quality Japanese craftmanship". According to Fender, the series "delivers the true essence of Fender instruments with refined body and neck shapes, ideal pickup settings and colours – all referenced from the original US drawing archives and various vintage instruments."

The Precisions and the 60 Jazz have alder bodies with a nitrocellulose lacquer over urethane finish, while the 70s Jazz has an ash body with a gloss polyester finish. All feature four-saddle vintage-style bridges with threaded steel saddles, pure vintage reverse open-gear tuners and nickel/chrome hardware. The 50s Precision has a thick 'C' maple neck and maple fingerboard, while the 60s P comes with a 1963 'C' maple neck and rosewood board. We'll have prices and international availability details as soon as possible.

www.fender.com

NO LIFE 'TIL LEATHER

Here's a quick nod to Pinegrove Leather, whose new bass strap is totally luxurious. Heavy, thick, of extremely high quality and most definitely useful for spreading the load for bassists with sensitive lower backs, the BS66 strap will cost £79/$99 plus shipping.

www.pinegroveleather.com

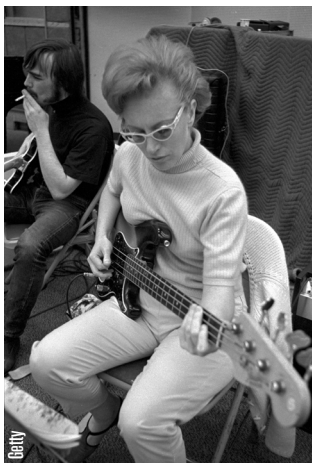
KAYE DAYS

Luthiers Ernie Ball recently interviewed the great Carol Kaye, who has played bass on an estimated 10,000 sessions in her more than 50-year career, and was also a member of the legendary Wrecking Crew. Her discography includes works with the Beach Boys, the Supremes, Frank Sinatra, Sam Cooke, Barbra Streisand and Simon & Garfunkel. She was also one of the first to test the firm's Stingray bass.

Interviewed to mark her 85th birthday in March, Kaye looked back on that golden age of sessions, explaining: "Most people don't know that about 98 percent of [bass tracks] cut in Hollywood in the 60s were done with a pick on flatwound strings. There are bass players who rip people to death for playing with a pick. I say, 'Hey, they don't know the history'. Most of those records that came out in the 60s were done with a pick on flatwounds. That was the sound. There was a piece of felt muting on there, too, to kill the natural overtones and undertones that could hurt your sound.

She added: "It's still a good sound. If you turn the knob, you've got Motown on one end, and [Nancy Sinatra's 'These Boots Are Made for Walkin'] on the other end. You have to play it right: up on the upbeat, down on the downbeat, and play close to the neck. Never near the bridge."

See http://blog.music-man.com for more.


Getty

Tim Tronchoe

HIGHLY STRUNG

Dr. Jonathan Kemp of the University of St. Andrews' School of Physics and Astronomy has been in touch. Along with the university's Music Centre, the bassist and scientist has developed "revolutionary strings using fresh construction techniques which take the instrument to places previous performers were unable to reach, in a tonal sense."

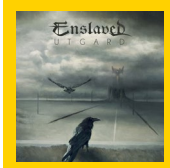
"Normal bass strings can be played far up the neck, but the lowest pitch strings sound bad and are poor at harmonising with higher notes," he has explained. "My new strings allow for improved tone when playing high up the neck of the instrument."

Dr. Kemp's study, published in SN Applied Sciences, shows that bass guitar strings are "inharmonic" when fretted high up the neck, and that producing thicker strings allows for greater harmonic content as well as improved pitch. Watch out for our full interview in due course.

www.kempacoustics.com

IN THE GROOVES

Albums rocking our office this month



NEW ALBUM

Enslaved, Utgard (2020)

In difficult times, why not relieve stress by imagining you're a Viking on the rampage?

OLD ALBUM

Dalis Car, InGladAloneness (2012)

Mick Karn's final EP. If you're unaware of Karn's astounding bass-playing, rectify that immediately.

REALLY OLD ALBUM

Stevie Wonder, I Was Made To Love Her (1967)

Two words: James Jamerson. Another two words: listen carefully.

CALLING COLLECT

Life Of Agony bassist and illustrator Alan Robert shared with us an insider's look at his vintage Fender P-Basses, as well as photos of additional rare items from his extensive collection. "For many years, I had been playing these neck-thru Spector USA NS basses made by Stuart Spector at his Woodstock, NY shop," he told us. "These are gorgeous, handcrafted instruments... True works of art. They are seriously like the Rolls-Royce of basses. I treasure them both and still use them all the time when writing at home. They play incredibly smooth and have two active EMG humbuckers. I switched to playing vintage Fender P-Basses during the recording of our Broken Valley album for Epic Records in 2005. I was chasing a more raw and gritty sound, so producer Greg Fidelman suggested I try some vintage instruments for the recording."

He went on: "His buddy brought in several Jazz and Precision basses for me to try out. They ranged in ages, but as soon as I plugged in the white 1974 Fender Precision, everyone's head turned around. This thing was an absolute beast! There was just something so unique and ballsy about this bass... I bought it right there on the spot. I ended up using it on every album since, including our latest, *The Sound Of Scars*."

www.lifeofagony.com

LOW LIFE

Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Live Performance tutor Antonio Angotti shares his advice for live recording

BIMM INSTITUTE

Hello bassists! This time around I will be looking at live recording scenarios, and what it takes to be a successful bass player in these settings. This might be a live recording in the studio, on the radio, on TV or as part of a show that is recorded for future release. Even within those categories, the roles can differ subtly in terms of the experience – but here are some core fundamentals that are consistent when taking on the job of a live recording bass player...

NERVE

Ever heard the term 'red light fever'? This is the moment when the record button is pushed, and we tense up – and suddenly we can't play the line we had down so accurately in the safety of our own space! The nature of recording means that a performance is captured at a moment in time that can be heard, and perhaps seen, for the rest of eternity. Ultimately, we need to train ourselves to play with pressure, and to practise to a point where mistakes are non-existent. My advice here would be to set yourself playalong goals at home where you aim to achieve a successful run through a given bass part in one or two takes. If you do make an error, isolate it and practise that part on a loop at a slower tempo. You can then gradually work in transitions either side of it, before bringing it back to full speed and attempting the track again.

VERSATILITY

These situations sometimes call for last-minute changes, additions or even the dreaded key transposition. It's important that we learn how to adapt by building our skillset to make these tasks more achievable. Learning musical intervals and applying them to how you visualise your bass parts will allow for easy modulation. Absorbing industry-standard vocabulary and terminology will help us jump on changes more quickly. Building a good sense of sub-divisional understanding will enable rephrasing or arrangement tweaks to be easily managed. Most importantly, training your ear through critical listening and learning a variety of bass parts will make you a more efficient musician.

Getty

> "AWARENESS OF DETAIL IS WHAT SEPARATES GOOD AND GREAT BASS PLAYERS"

DETAIL

The small stuff matters! When recording live in the studio, you are part of creating the definitive version of the track. When recording live on TV or radio, you're there to give an accurate performance of the track. In both instances, time feel is an essential component, and therefore applying the correct beat placement will help give the track its drive, precision or pocket as intended. I find note lengths are vastly underestimated, because they can provide huge benefits in a number of ways. You can't create an effective groove without space, and therefore the use of staccato note lengths is fundamental. Rather than dynamics being purely loud or quiet, dynamics can also be derived from note lengths: a steady transition into legato from staccato can help to build a section dynamically. Awareness of detail is what separates good and great bass players.

TONE CRAFTING

Another key skill is knowing how to achieve a variety of sounds and signature tones with the equipment you have. There are a lot of interviews, forums and live footage that can point you in the right direction, so building tone profiles for different genres and players can be a great bit of prep for any live recording – especially when time is tight. If you're jumping in for a live radio or TV session, it's also a good idea to touch base with the producer or original bassist to seek advice on what gear they used. If you don't have access to the gear that you need, having a bass and rig that is versatile will cover a good amount of ground. Use your ear and compare until you have something close.

Do you have any questions surrounding live performance? Message me at @MrA_TaxTheBass and I'll broach them in an upcoming issue. Catch you all next time!

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www.promenademusic.co.uk

4 String Basses

15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

Cort

16343 - Cort Action 4 PJ Bass Guitar, Open Pore Wal.
19278 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black OPB
19738 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black OPB, Used
19701 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Walnut OPW
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
16157 - Cort Action PJ, Open Pore Black Cherry
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
16608 - Cort B4 Plus Artisan 4-String Lefthanded
19640 - Cort B4FL MHPZ Fretless Bass
12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 4 String Bass
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass
19150 - Danelectro 56 Single Cutaway Bass, Black

Fender

18725 - Fender Am Elite Jazz, Sat Jade Pearl Met
19643 - Fender Am Orig. 70s Jazz, Vintage White
18492 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass Penny
17076 - Fender American Pro P Bass, Sunburst
18300 - Fender Classic Series 60s Jazz L, OWhite
16298 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink, Used
19238 - Fender Flea Active Jazz Bass Silver
8927 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass in Sunburst
18784 - Fender Ltd Ed Ash Am. Prof. Jazz Bass
19570 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Sunburst
18095 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Black
19472 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
19503 - Fender Vintera '60s Jazz Bass, Firemist
19316 - Fender Vintera Jazz Bass, Sunburst
18423 - Godin Shifter Classic 4 Vint.Burst HGRN
19600 - Gretsch G2220 Junior Jet Bass, Sunburst
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
19420 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass, Sunburst
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
17083 - Italia Maranello Bass, Black Sparkle
18208 - Italia Torino Bass, Trans Blue, Used
19216 - Jackson Bass Minion JS1XM, Snow White
19565 - Marco Bass N1 TFL 4-String, Orange, Used
19702 - Markbass MB JP Black Chrome 4 GD PF

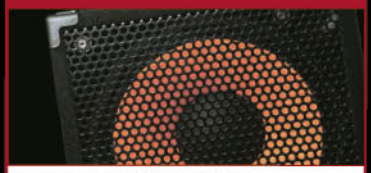
MUSIC MAN

16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
18253 - MusicMan Stingray 4, Blue Pearl, Used
19460 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Blue
19116 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Diamond Blue
18114 - NS Design WAV4 Double Bass Trans Black
6919 - Rickenbacker 4003, Mapleglo
18228 - Rickenbacker 4003, Midnight Blue
16421 - Rickenbacker 4003 Bass, Fireglo
7890 - Rickenbacker 4003, Jetglo
18077 - Rickenbacker 4003S Bass Guitar Mapleglo
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 Fretless, Blk Used
19776 - Sandberg California Cherry Sunburst Used
19518 - Schecter Diamond Siletto Ex. Bass, Used

Squier

18933 - Squier C. Vibe 60s Jazz Bass Fretless
19117 - Squier Classic Vibe 60s Jazz Bass DBlue
19067 - Squier CV 60s P. Bass, Olympic White
19187 - Sterling by MusicMan SubRay4 Vint. Cream
14490 - Vintage LV4 Lefthanded 4 String
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
17084 - Vintage Reissued VJ74 Bass Natural Ash
19680 - Vintage VS4 Reissued Bass, Cherry Red
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
17877 - Yamaha TRBX604FM 4 String, Matte Amber

Bass Cabinets



13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
16800 - BLUGuitar Nanocab
18851 - Bergantino HDN-112 Bass Cab
18852 - Bergantino HDN-210 Bass Cab
18855 - Bergantino HDN-212 Bass Cab
18853 - Bergantino HDN-410 Bass Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16039 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16444 - Gallien Krueger CX210 Bass Cab
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Super K1 Alain Caron
17732 - Markbass Marcus Miller Cab 102
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab

ORANGE

6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
10266 - Orange OBC210 Bass Guitar Speaker Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
16856 - Trace Elliot 1x10 Elf Cab
19686 - Trace Elliot TE28E 2x8 bass cabinet

Acoustic Basses

19148 - Breedlove Solo Electro Acoustic Bass
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
19342 - Ovation B778TX Electro Acoustic Bass
12180 - Protection Racket Ac. Bass Case Dlx
15117 - Takamine GB30CE Electro Acoustic

Fretless Basses

16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 , Blk Used
18933 - Squier C. Vibe 60s Jazz Bass Fretless

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

EDEN

13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
19163 - Eich BC112 PRO Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

Fender

13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

GK GALLIEN-KRUEGER

16765 - Gallien Krueger MB110 Bass Combo
16445 - Gallien Krueger MB112 Bass Combo
16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112 Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin 300W,1x15
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
19641 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P, Used
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
18371 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD101 Micro60
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona
19729 - Markbass Ninja 102-500 Bass Amp
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Amp
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Amp
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Amp
19512 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Used
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
18035 - Roland Cube CB60XL Bass Amp
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)

Electric & Silent Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass,Blk
16847 - NS Design NXTA Upright Bass, Active
14014 - Yamaha SLB100 Silent Upright Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Bass Heads

14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO III 575W, Used
18848 - Bergantino Bi Amp
18854 - Bergantino Custom Padded Carry Bag
18850 - Bergantino Forte Bass Amplifier
19763 - Bergantino Forté HP Lightweight Bass Amp
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp

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19468 - GALLIEN KRUEGER LEGACY 500
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
17147 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Bass Head
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
19081 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head USED
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
19484 - Markbass Evo 1 Bass Amp Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
19282 - Markbass Little Mark Vintage Bass Amp Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
19674 - Orange Little Bass Thing Bass Amp Head
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
16531 - Trace Elliot Elf 200 Watt Bass Amp Head

5 String Basses

19147 - Cort A5 Plus SCMS Open Pore Natural
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
13803 - Cort B5 5 String, Tobacco Sunburst, Used
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
10213 - Cort GB75WBL 5 String Bass, White Blonde
18731 - Cort GB75JJ 5 String Bass Aqua Blue
16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
16766 - Ibanez SR30TH5PII Premium, 5-String Bass
18254 - MTD Saratoga Deluxe, 3 Tone Sunburst
19381 - Marleaux MBass 5 String Bass, Burl Top
19727 - Music Man StingRay 5 Special Burnt Apple
14608 - Overwater Progress Deluxe, Pre-Owned
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
19775 - Shine 5 String Bass, Trans Blue, Used

Spector

11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
19735 - Spector Bass Rebop 5DLX Blck Cherry
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
16773 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Trans Black
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
13214 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Black
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
16776 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5, Black Cherry
19158 - Sterling by MusicMan Sub Ray 5 Bass, HBS
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass
17879 - Yamaha TRBX605FM 5 String Dark Red Burst

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

BASS OF **TOMORROW**

GHS Strings have helped to shape the sound of the world's bass players since 1964. Hywel Davies asks Jon Moody, one of the company's top minds, what the future holds

Words: Hywel Davies

From endorsee to employee, Jon Moody has helped to push the GHS brand further into the 21st century. For the past seven years, Moody has held the prestigious title of Manager of Brand Identity and Development with the family-run company – but there's a lot more to his role with GHS than an impressive business card. What are the most important lessons he's learned while being at GHS, we ask?

"It's actually something I picked up from my dear friends over at Aguilar, during conversations at the NAMM show," Jon says. "Their mindset is that every part of your signal chain plays an integral role in shaping your sound. Understanding the role each part plays helps you make very thoughtful and deliberate design choices.

"That knowledge has been incredibly valuable when designing strings, working with builders on their own private label of strings, or working out new ideas. Being able to drill down into what the purpose of the strings is and what they do to shape the tone, has allowed me to make some strong edits to existing strings, or come up with new string concepts. Our Balanced Nickel strings are a direct result of that kind of thinking: they allowed me to really focus on what sounds the strings were making – what was similar, what was different, and adjust as necessary."

For better or worse, strings will always be at the centre of a bassist's decision-making process on their path to divine tone. With so many factors to consider, it's easy to lose yourself in a pedantic tangle of questions that'll take time away from what's really important – playing. What's the best advice Moody can give to players looking for the best possible sound?

"Don't read too much into anything – especially on forums," he advises. "You can get caught up in the minutiae of balanced tension, tapered cores, core-to-cover ratio, this material over that... It's overwhelming! You end up spending more time talking about bass than playing it, and that's a problem. The best thing you can do is put the strings on your bass, plug in, and play."

With a new decade comes new opportunities for innovation – so what does the rest of the 2020s hold for GHS strings? "The revamped Bass Progressives 2.0 are coming out this spring, which I'm pretty excited about," says Jon. "I've taken the concepts and construction that I introduced with our Balanced Nickels and brought them into the Progressives line. I'm always revisiting our current line as well – just because that's how we've always done it, doesn't mean that we can't make things better. It's a continuous process of learning." Amen to that.

www.ghsstrings.com, www.justmoody.com

"DON'T READ TOO MUCH INTO FORUMS, JUST PLUG IN AND PLAY"

THEORY OF THE MONTH

TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON

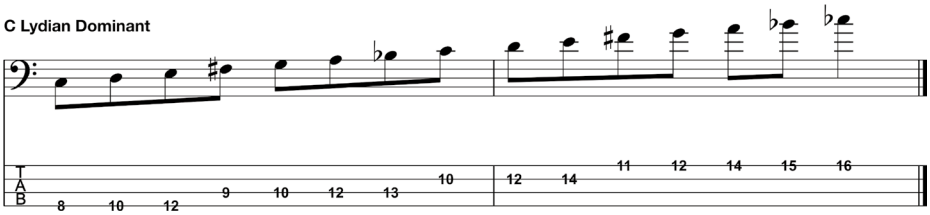
Leading on from our introduction to melodic minor harmony, Nik Preston delves a little deeper into the Lydian Dominant mode – mode IV of melodic minor

Welcome! Ready for some cool theory to lift your spirits in these strange times? As many of you will already know, we tend to employ Lydian Dominant over dom7#11 chords, as its construction is 1, 2, 3, #4, 5, 6, ♭7 – see **Example 1**. But, and it's a big but, we don't always encounter chord symbols which capture every extension unique to the mode which we may choose to employ. This means that we often need an understanding of a chord's function relative to the harmony in order to come up with suitable, harmonically 'correct' choices. We've looked at tritone substitution in past issues, but just to recap, we can substitute a resolving dominant for a dominant chord a tritone away. Dmin7, G7, Cmaj (**Example 2**) could now become Dmin7, D♭7, Cmaj (**Example 3**). This gives us chromatically descending root movement and is a harmonic technique that is in widespread use.

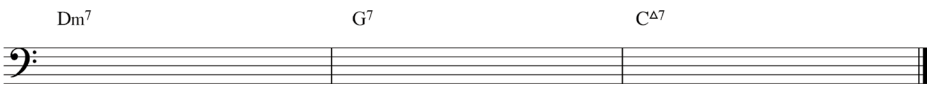
In a popular music setting, the chromatic descending dominant chords in Stevie Wonder's 'Superstition' are a great example. This pattern of chords is a great option for Lydian Dominant use and, after practising over dom7#11 chords in isolation, this movement is probably the one we are most likely to encounter. There are multiple other possibilities, but one which we need to familiarise ourselves with is the instances of a dom7 chord built on the ♭7 degree of the major key we are in – for example, B♭7 moving to Cmaj. This is a very common movement, and the dominant chord may often be preceded by a min7 chord a fifth above – such as Fmin7, B♭7, Cmaj. 'Stella By Starlight' by Victor Young is a popular example, which sees an A♭7 chord resolving up a tone to the tonic of Bbmaj.

Example 4 shows a progression containing tritone substitutions, while **Example 5** shows another progression which employs the dominant chord built on the ♭7 degree. **Example 6** shows a D♭ Lydian Dominant played in sevenths. You know the drill – take this slowly, practise through all keys, and ultimately apply it to your repertoire!

Example 1

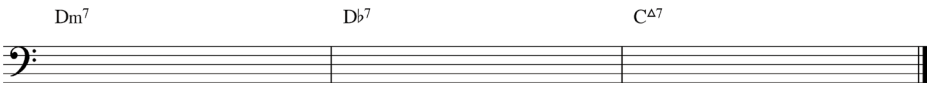


Example 2

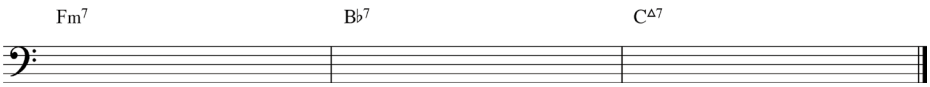


Example 3

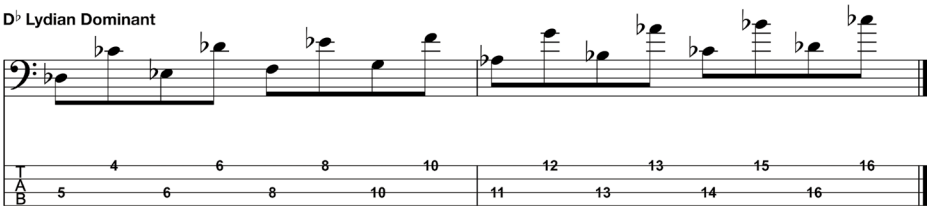
Example 4



Example 5



Example 6



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FIRST BASS

A killer new section of the mag devoted to new, new-ish or just amazing bass players

TIM STARACE

YYNOT BAND

What was your way into bass?
I wanted to be Gene Simmons, like most kids back in 1976. At a yard sale on my block, a neighbour was selling an album called *Learn To Play Bass Guitar With The Ventures*, so I bought that for 25 cents, cut two strings off my brother's acoustic guitar, and started teaching myself how to play. 'La Bamba' was the first song I taught myself from that album. My first bass was a Cameo that my mom bought from the mall in 1976. It was like a piece of plywood with strings on it. It was tobacco sunburst, and I was the proudest nine-year-old in town. My first real bass was a Fender Music Master, then a Rickenbacker 4001 and a Fender Jazz.

What bass gear do you currently use?
As far as basses go, 1977 and 1981 Rickenbacker 4001s, and a few Geddy Lee Signature Jazz Basses with custom-wound pickups by Tom Brantley. For amps, primarily Ampeg SVTs which I still consider the absolute pinnacle of tube amps for basses. Now onto the fun stuff... I never play live or record without a Tech 21 NYC SansAmp of some sort. It's the most integral part of the equation I use to obtain what I like to call the 'growly nougat'. Currently I am using the new DI-2112 which is amazing. For strings, D'Addario EXL 170 Nickels, they just seem to last forever. I love them to death. I also use Roland PK-5 MIDI pedals and an Oxygen 61 Keyboard controller.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Never give up and have fun. I laid the bass down in 1996 and picked it up again in 2012 and only then realised how much I missed it.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Hmm, that's a tough one. There are so many incredible bassists that influenced me along the way. I guess I would have to say Geddy Lee because he had such incredible energy and swagger, especially early on. But Geezer, Hughes, Pinnick, Harris, Simmons, McCartney, Sultan, Daisley, Sarzo, Sklar, Barrow, Murray, and Squire all played huge roles in my development and the love of playing bass.

What are your current projects?
Our second album *Resonance* and our first self-titled CD is available on our website, and all digital streaming services.

www.yynotband.com

HAIXU ZHOU

HOLOKASTRIAL, NECROSIS

What was your way into bass?
I was a drummer when I was 15. I lived in a very small town in China, so it was hard to find a metal or rock school. My mom found a drum teacher: I asked him to teach me some Megadeth songs, but he taught me pop songs instead. I was sad that I couldn't play the metal songs that I liked, so I changed to bass. My first bass was an Ibanez GSR200.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I play a Killer five-string bass. It makes tuning easier. My effects are an MXR Noise Gate and M87 Compressor, and I use a Peavey MAX115 amp.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Practise more than eight hours every day.

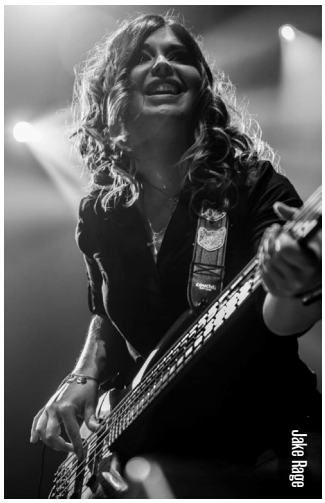
Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Cliff Burton.

What are your current projects?
I am the bassist of two bands, Holokastrial (death metal) and Necrosis (thrash metal) in Shanghai, China. Holokastrial already has two albums, *Echoes From The Devil Valley* and *Horror Of Abomination*. If you like 80s-style death metal, don't miss it. Necrosis is a new band: we have six new demos and are ready to record an EP. Plans for the future? We want to tour in China, Japan and even America – if there are fans, ha ha!

www.facebook.com/holokastrial

APRYL MARIE

AGAINST US ALL


Jake Rage

What was your way into bass?
I grew up surrounded by music. My father has been a musician most of his life and so has my mother. My parents were in a Blondie/Pat Benatar tribute band that practised in our house. I was always interested in bass-lines and would sing them from my room while their band rehearsed. When I was around 11 or 12 years old, I started sneaking into the practice room after school before my father got off work. I would play unplugged on the bass that my dad had purchased for my mom to learn (she never did). I got caught, got in a little bit of trouble for being sneaky, and eventually that became my first bass. I have not stopped playing since and it has shaped my life.

What bass gear do you currently use?
Ibanez SRFF805 and SR675 basses with Darkglass Tone Capsules installed and a Fender American Jazz Deluxe, all five-strings. I started using a five-string when I played in a cover band to be able to limit the amount of basses I had to tote with me. I moved to a multi-scale five-string when I was playing in a progressive rock band. Now that I'm doing metal again, I appreciate how the multi-scale doesn't lose any clarity or aggression with those lower notes, especially when tuned down. For effects, it's Darkglass again: the X7 and the Super Symmetry Compression pedal. I also have an MXR M13 Smart Gate Pedal, a Tech 21 MIDI Mongoose and a Shure GLXD16 Digital Wireless. The amp is a Darkglass M900 V2. I have not used a bass cabinet in over a year.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Know when to hide and when to shine. Less can be more in the right situation. To me, the bass is the 'goosebumps' factor in the band. The notes you play, where you play them, and how you play them, if done artfully, can bring the song to another level. Make sure your tone complements and enhances the guitars, fills out the band, and cuts through, even if it doesn't sound 'great' on its own.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Geddy Lee. He has inspired me so much. He was playing keys with his feet while singing and carrying the melody on bass! I even have a cat named after him. I remember watching live videos and studying how he held the bass, how he moved, how he fretted. I've borrowed a lot from him in regards to how I play and when I'm writing I will sometimes say to myself, 'What would Geddy do?'

What are your current projects?
You caught me at a very exciting time! I am at the beginning of a new project, Against Us All. This past December, I transitioned out of my last project I was in for almost three years. That band had some major successes and I hope Against Us All will as well. We plan to release our first EP before the end of 2020.

www.facebook.com/april.marie.1610

BÁRBARA MALAISE

EL CLUB DEL RIFLE

What was your way into bass?
I started playing bass because I was interested in rock culture. Seeing rock bands on television in my home country of Argentina amazed me, and even with no musical knowledge I identified with bass and knew it was the instrument I had to play. I didn't have a band, and I didn't know anyone with a band. I just wanted to play bass in one. My first bass was a Fender Urge Stu Hamm active. I didn't like the colour, but luckily I knew a luthier who painted it for me. He even added glitter!

What bass gear do you currently use?
Out of all the basses I've had, my favourite is the one I'm currently using, a Gretsch G5440LSB, because I fell in love with the sound of hollow-body basses. I also play a 1979 Gibson Ripper. I use Ampeg and Fender amps and Tech 21, MXR and Electro Harmonix effects.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Find your own style. Don't stick to the techniques you know. Pursue your dreams and what you believe in, beyond what your family and society expects from you. Put aside all expectations and be guided only by what you think will make you happy.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
My heroes are Lemmy Kilmister and Dee Dee Ramone: I've always admired bass players with personality, people who stand on stage and you can't look away. Peter Hook's my favourite, because his way of playing bass had a huge impact on me the first time I listened to it.

What are your current projects?
My band, El Club Del Rifle, was formed in 2016. Our idea was to play songs by our favourite artists – the Velvet Underground, Jesus & Mary Chain, Johnny Cash. As months went by, our first own songs came, which, while retaining the initial influences, gained a new musical direction. We presented our album all around Capital Federal and Gran Buenos Aires with an excellent impact. In October 2019, aside from our live presentations we put out our single 'Gijoe', with the participation of a gospel choir. We're currently recording an acoustic EP that's gonna have new instruments that we haven't used so far, characteristic of El Río De La Plata.

Instagram: @elclubdelrifle

CHRIS EL

INCITE

What was your way into bass?
Well, like a lot of bass players, I started out on guitar, but as a kid I had really chubby sausage fingers. I just didn't get the swing of it. I got super frustrated and put it down. A few years later, while hanging at a friend's house, I picked up a bass guitar he had lying around. It just felt good in my hands, it felt right. My chubby digits moved a little easier up and down the fretboard. I could hear the notes a little better and was able to pick up songs a little easier. I was hooked!

What bass gear do you currently use?
Bass-wise, my mains have been ESP Viper, FB-4 and ESP Vintage Four. I run a Mesa Boogie M6 Carbine and a Powerhouse 810, and pedalboard-wise I use a Line 6 G50 wireless, TC Electronic tuner, Sentry noise gate, Digitech Drop and Darkglass Alpha Omega and B7K.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Play like yourself, and don't try to emulate anyone else, and play well in the confines of what you and your band are doing. The Evan Brewers, Jeff Hughells and Les Claypools of the world are few and far between. Sometimes you've just got to hold it down.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
I'd have to say Geezer Butler. In my opinion, he's everything a bass player should be; he's solid in the pocket, flashy when he needs to be, and always tasteful. He never overplays. I know this is probably an unpopular opinion, but I feel like a lot of modern bass players really overplay, with a ton of noodling around on six-, seven- and eight-string basses. That's cool and all, it's really impressive, and maybe it's just professional jealousy because I couldn't imagine being able to play like that – but to me, if you're that good noodling around, why don't you just play guitar?

What are your current projects?
I've been on the last three Incite releases: *Up In Hell*, *Oppression* and *Built To Destroy*.

Instagram: @saint._el

Red Hare Images

NIGHTHAWK

HEAVY TEMPLE

Dante Torrent

What was your way into bass?
I played piano and cello all throughout school, and the latter into college. After a year, I dropped out and still wanted to play music, but heavier. I picked up a bass so I could join a band and 14 years later, here we are. The first bass I ever owned was a 50th Anniversary American Fender Jazz. I bought it from a friend and really didn't know what an incredible instrument I was getting, but I still have it and play it. Right now the band is endorsed by Black Harbor Strings and Coffin Gear. I'm a Framus & Warwick artist.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I think my favourite bass is my Warwick Bootsy reissue. At one point I was playing a five-string, and have owned two. It made sense at the time for the band I was in because of the tuning, but additionally, I like the freedom it gives you when you're higher up on the fretboard. My effects are an Electrofoods Oprichniki distortion, a Modtone Atomic Phaser and an Electro-Harmonix Epitome, and I use a 1974 Acoustic 370 amp, backed up with a Sunn Coliseum, played through an Ampeg 8x10 cab.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Don't overthink anything. Your primary job is to hold down the rhythm: you can add the flair later. Learning how to shred in the box really helped me to dress up my playing.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
This is a tough question. Maybe Geddy Lee, because I can't play any of his riffs. Perhaps also John Paul Jones. Not only is he a fantastic bassist, he's also a skilled keyboard player and songwriter. I also love Nick Oliveri's style. He never really plays the note, he kind of plays around it. Carol Kaye is one of the most prolific studio bassists of all time. Obviously Lemmy, enough said. And last but certainly not least, Bootsy Collins. The man is a funky genius.

What are your current projects?
Heavy Temple is my band, and has been for over seven years now. After a few other bands dissolved I started this one. I wrote and recorded a demo in my basement and eventually it turned into an album. The line-up has changed a handful of times, but the current one is arguably the best. Heavy Temple has two records under its belt, and we just finished up the third one.

www.heavytemple.com

SORAYA DIEBRA

LOS ELECTRICOS

What was your way into bass?
Like all musicians, you start with one instrument and end up playing a bit of everything. I started playing guitar when I was seven. At 15, I played the bass for the first time because I was curious about it, and to teach the bass players of different bands I was starting. When I did my trial with Los Electricos in 2001, I wasn't a very good bass player, but they gave me some probation time and I started to work and study hard so I could stay in the band.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I play a Fender Jazz and Mustang through a Fender Bassman combo. I prefer four-strings because in my style I don't see the need for a different sound, and I could go crazy with more strings. If I play reggae someday, I might have a five-string bass.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
Keep a good tempo, have a good sound and be always at the song's service.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Bill Wyman, Sting, Paul McCartney, Carles Benavent and Flea.

What are your current projects?
There is a great history behind my band, Los Electricos. It all started in 1994, and the first gig was in 1997. I saw them live then, I was 20 years old, and I loved them. I did a trial with them in 2001 and I've been in the band since then. We're based in Barcelona, Spain, and have recorded about a dozen LPs. Right now we are working on improving our sound as a band and recording new tracks. We would love to play festivals too. Any managers around?

www.loselectricos.com

Toni Egea

WANDA ORTIZ

THE IRON MAIDENS

What was your way into bass?
When I was nine years old, I signed up for music in school but was late to class on the day we had to pick out which instrument we wanted to play. All of the school instruments were checked out by the time I got there except for one double bass, so I became a bassist.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I've been playing G&L basses for forever, and owned and liked them before I was endorsed with them. I also use a Sonic Maximizer pedal from time to time by BBE Sound, an affiliated company. For the last 15 years or so, I've been using Schroeder cabinets. I love their powerful, punchy sound. They're solidly built for heavy wear and tear, yet are lightweight enough for the working musician to comfortably manoeuvre, load, and unload every day. I usually transport all my gear myself so portability is important to me. I use Gallien Krueger amps. I've been using the MB Fusion 800, the GK Plex Preamp – when I have to use the backline provided instead of my own gear – as well as the MB150S which is a great small combo amp for small gigs. My latest GK is the MB500: light weight, sounds smooth and is perfect for practicing inside, but powerful enough to play with live drums.

What's the best advice you can give us about playing bass?
I've only ever seen people held back due to lack of good technique and/or inability to read music. If you're having trouble with technique, find a good teacher to help you out with that. Learn to read if you get the chance. If you have good technique and can read music, then the sky is the limit and you can be useful to anyone anywhere.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Steve Harris (obviously), Geddy Lee, Chuck Rainey, Duck Dunn, James Jamerson, Jaco Pastorius, Stanley Clarke, Francois Rabbath...

What are your current projects?
Since 2002, I've been playing with the Iron Maidens, an all-female tribute to Maiden. Our plan, at first, was to be only a fun side project as we were all in other bands at the time but, after the first few gigs, we started getting calls from all over the US and then eventually from other countries. Now this project keeps us pretty busy! When I'm not playing with the Maidens, I try to freelance whenever possible. I was a double bass major in college so I'll take gigs with orchestras and other ensembles in the Southern California area. I'm a regular with South Coast Symphony for example. I figure it can never hurt to keep my foot in the door with something else.

www.theironmaidens.com

STONE UNTURNED

Is there a bigger band on the planet in terms of cultural impact, commercial stature and sheer heritage than the Rolling Stones? Darryl Jones looks back at the path that led him to the very, very top

Words: Joel McIver

Photos: Yamaha, Getty

We cover as much ground as possible in this magazine when it comes to styles of music, and we feature up-and-coming bassists as much as megastars. It's our job to lay accolades at the feet of bass players from the jazz, soul, pop, blues and funk worlds just as much as players who specialise in plain old rock, and we're not easily impressed by sales figures.

With all that in mind, though, even we have to admit to blown minds at the sheer stature of the Rolling Stones. You may, or may not, regard them as innovators in their field; you may feel that their best days are long behind them. These are arguable viewpoints, but two essential elements are not open to debate: 1) the Rolling Stones are still a massive commercial presence in 2020, selling out stadiums worldwide without new music to sell; 2) their bassist since 1993, Darryl Jones, is himself a force of nature, with a stage and session career that is second to none.

Jones is a deeply serious fellow when asked about the nuts and bolts of his trade, but

Ampeg
Sonor

one who dissolves into laughter when recalling the more 'unorthodox' of his former employers (we're looking at you, M. Davis). He has enjoyed a gold-standard few decades among the low frequencies. Born in Chicago in 1961, he made his bones with the aforementioned Miles at the age of only 21. After two albums with the 'mercurial'™ jazz icon, he joined Sting's all-star band for the *Dream Of The Blue Turtles* album in 1985, subsequently playing with Herbie Hancock, Madonna, Eric Clapton, the Headhunters, Peter Gabriel and many more stellar artists.

Jones's full-time gig since 1993, however, has been with the Rolling Stones, taking Bill Wyman's place when the long-time bassist stepped aside. As Wyman had been a Stone for 31 years at that point, arithmetic reveals that Jones is only five years away from equalling his predecessor's tenure alongside Mick Jagger (vocals), Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood (guitars) and Charlie Watts (drums), like you didn't know the line-up already.

Little wonder, then, that sitting down for a chat with Jones is quite an experience. Note that this interview took place before the current pandemic was announced, so some (or all) of his plans may have changed – but even so, what a musician, and what a privilege.

What do you do when you're not playing with the Rolling Stones, Darryl?
Well, I'm spending some time on a documentary about me, *Like A Rolling Stone*, that has been in production for the last couple of years. I'm working on the score for that right now. I'm always doing a little bit here, a little bit there. I just recorded with Bill Evans, Robben Ford and Keith Carlock for a record that is going to be released.

Tell us about the documentary.
A filmmaker called Eric Hamburg, who was a co-producer on two Oliver Stone films, *Nixon* and *Any Given Sunday*, came to me a few years ago and told me that there should be a documentary about me. His original idea was a feature-length musicians' film in a similar way that *Any Given Sunday* was about the inner life of football players. I don't know exactly how he got onto me or my career, but he said that he'd like to do a documentary, and we've been working on it for the past three years, doing interviews with the Rolling Stones and other musicians that I've worked with. We've shot a couple of gigs of music that I wrote, some of which I'm singing on, and we're finishing up Act Three and getting this thing out. As well as all that, I'm always working on trying to stay healthy and get into good shape for the Stones tour that's coming up in a couple of months. So yeah, life keeps me busy enough.

Is a Stones tour a physically demanding exercise?
Not physically, no. It's pretty cushy as far as touring goes. They don't do a lot of gigs, they don't do gigs back to back, and the travel and the hotels are all very nicely organised, so it's not a tough tour in that regard. There are certain things that are difficult, like being away from home and trying to eat right and stuff like that, but I've figured out my way to do that. I make a dash for a good health-food store when I get to a town, and get a few supplies, and I'm learning more and more about health and what works for me. So, no, it's not difficult.

What gear do you take out with the Stones?
I use the Stones' old 1970s Ampeg SVT head as well as going back and forth with some newer SVTs, and I always use two SVT cabs. In addition to that, I've been using QSC gear, some of their K.2 series – the 18" subwoofer and the K.12.2 cabs. Also, I got onto a couple of the Jonas Hellborg preamps that he did for Warwick a number of years ago: I've been using that to run in front of the QSC gear.

Jonas is a guru of bass amplification.
Yes, he's very well versed in that stuff. When I went over there, he told me that he had acquired a Neve board a few years before and had it shipped to his home in Sweden. After he got it he realised that no-one knew how to repair it, so he basically learned how to repair it himself. His preamp comes from some of the knowledge that he gained from that, because it does sound very warm and natural, like a Neve channel. Anyway, the QSC gear is there for me to have a little bit more horsepower on stage, and the SVT is what is being recorded and what is basically going out from the bass, along with a direct signal, out to the front of house.

It's a classic bass tone.
The sound of an SVT for rock'n'roll – it's hard to beat that. That stuff has been part of the Stones' repertoire for years. I've been using them almost 20 years now. When Dave Natale came on board as the soundman, he said that he'd found it to be a really great sound for rock'n'roll. The guys then said 'We have an old SVT', and they have great people who keep them

Darryl performing with Sting's all-star band in 1985

working really good. They have a tube guy who looks at all the tube gear on stage and keeps it working great. So it's been either that or a newer head in terms of amplification.

Do you use in-ears for monitoring?
I do use in-ears, but the one thing that they lack is the feeling of air moving behind you, which I really like to have. It's just one of those things that makes me feel a little more comfortable. Now, Keith, Ronnie and Charlie do not use in-ears, and I want them to hear what I'm doing, which is why I've used both systems for a number of years.

Presumably, whatever gear you need, there is the budget to get it and the staff to maintain it?
That is, absolutely, a luxury of playing with this band.

You don't have to carry your own amp, I assume.
Not with them, no. I still work with some people who don't tour quite as luxuriously as the Stones do, so I'm not all the way out of that. I think my carrying gear days are mostly behind me, hopefully. On a lot of the smaller gigs I do, particularly the electric jazz gigs, I use the QSC stuff, a couple of K.8.2 cabs, the smaller speakers.

What bass guitars do you take out with the Stones?
I take a number of them out. For songs from the early 60s going into the 70s, I use some chambered instruments. I use a Fritz Brothers bass. They did a copy of the old Kay electric bass that's chambered – so it's hollow but it doesn't have any holes. It has a single lipstick-type pickup and it's really great for the early stuff, if you use a pick to get that kind of edgy, almost mod bass sound. I also use a Fender Mustang, which is funny because I grew up playing one of those, when I was very young. I ran into one in a shop that was the exact same colour as the one I played when I was a kid, and it was in really great shape, so I asked them to hold it for me because it was literally the bass of my childhood. I pulled it out and started playing it a little bit on some of the Stones' stuff and it sounded incredible.

> "MY CARRYING GEAR DAYS ARE MOSTLY BEHIND ME, HOPEFULLY..."

Where does the Mustang tone fit in?
That's for songs like 'Start Me Up' and '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction', and it sounds great, played with flatwound strings and a pick. People are now starting to get hip to the fact that short-scale basses have a very distinctive sound, I guess because of the string tension. What else am I using? I have a new Gretsch Thunder Jet bass, and I use a Music Man Stingray on the two or three Stones songs where a fretless is needed.

You're also running a guitar company, Jones Musical Instruments.
I'm really at the early stages, you know. I've got a Precision-style bass, which is called the Chatham bass, because I grew up in an area in the south side of Chicago called West Chatham, and a Jazz bass I call my Gresham bass, after a neighbourhood that's just near where I grew up. I play the Chatham bass on 'Miss You' and in the little area in that song where I feature. I also use Laklands on a few tunes. I think that's about it for now. It's probably four to six instruments on a gig.

When you joined the Stones in 1993, did you play Bill Wyman's bass parts as he had recorded them, or did you add your own spin?
You know, an interesting thing happened there. Before the audition, I went out and bought a bunch of Stones *Greatest Hits* records and started trying to figure out some bass-lines. That really showed me, even before the audition, that there was no way I was really gonna be able to learn these bass-lines verbatim. But there are certain things that Bill and whoever was playing bass – Keith was on a bunch of it, Ronnie's on some of it – did, that really are parts of songs. I try to cover those things, but I can't think of any song that I really try to play exactly like Bill played, you know.

Do the other Stones have strong views about that?
At one rehearsal, I figured out what Bill had played on 'Respectable', and I started

playing it, and Mick was like 'Where are you going?' I said, 'Well, this is what Bill played on the song' and he said 'No no, don't play that. Play what you hear'. So neither I nor they are that precious about that stuff. The first time I rehearsed with them, I asked Keith, 'Hey man, did you play bass on this song?' and he said 'Yeah'. I said 'So what's the bass-line?' and he was like, 'I don't know, man. You're the bass player, you tell me what the bass-line is!' Ha ha! So they're pretty cool about letting me do what I want. I still want to play the essence of the song. If there's something in the essence of the bass-line that needs to be played to make the song what it is, they seem pretty trusting of me that I'll find those things. The rest they leave to me, basically.

Some parts are very recognisable – the giant slide at the end of '19th Nervous Breakdown', for example.
Oh yeah! That's a lot of fun to play, and that's why I use all the different instruments. The Fritz Brothers bass is great for playing that mids tone on 'She's So Cold', with a pick tone on flatwounds. I use that for anything that sounds that way on record from that period. If you listen to what Bill was playing in 1985, then you're talking about roundwound strings, maybe on a Steinberger, so I try to choose the right bass. If it's a more modern sound, then I'll use one of the Jones instruments.

Have you experienced any physical issues after so long playing bass?
Not very much, man. I will say that there are a few moves that I do with my fingers that I look at now from the position of 'Is barring that way, and playing that first note with your finger, is that sustainable?'

The mercurial Miles Davis kept Darryl on his toes

Darryl onstage with Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood

Ha ha! I think 'Maybe I need to find a better way to play that stuff...' But I've been very lucky. I haven't had many back issues, I've not had many issues with my hands. It's just about getting older and understanding that a joint might be a little bit sore after playing something, and how I can find another way to do it that is less demanding on joints and fingers.

Elsewhere in this magazine, Lee Sklar talks about a healthy lifestyle being paramount for a sustained career as a bass player.
Absolutely, and that doesn't surprise me. You know, whenever I see Lee and talk to him, he always seems so very, very positive and happy. He's got a great sense of humour and he seems to be an easy-going guy. He's got his own flow, and of course he's an incredible musician.

> "THE STONES ARE COOL ABOUT LETTING ME DO WHAT I WANT"

You recorded *Decoy* (1984) and *You're Under Arrest* ('85) with Miles Davis. Was he directive about the bass parts, or did he welcome your ideas?
Both. Miles trusted musicians more than his reputation would lead people to believe. He would let you in and allow you to try stuff, and then from the stuff that you tried, he would single parts out and say 'Okay, I want to hear more of that'. Every once in a while he'd say 'Play this', but he'd never play the same thing twice, which always led to a certain built-in amount of variation into what was going on. The other thing that he would do, after you'd been playing that for a few months, was to say 'You know the bass-line you play on such-and-such a song? Don't play that any more. Find something else!' You'd think 'Shit. It took me weeks to figure out what was working with that song'. But that was his way of pushing you to come up with new ideas and a different approach.

So he kept you on your toes?
Yeah. One of the first songs I recorded with Miles was the song 'Decoy', and at first I was playing that bass-line with my fingers. We rehearsed it that way, but right before we recorded it he turns to me and says 'Darryl, thump it!' and I said 'Which part?' He said [gravelly whisper] 'All of it!' So that was a situation where he asked me to do something that I really wasn't sure I could do – but I just did it. Listening back to that record now, I'm thinking to myself, 'Why would I have ever thought to do it any differently than what he recommended?' It's one of the parts that I'm most proud of.

Did the bass parts also vary when you played them live?
Every night he'd listen to the gig after the show. If you came up with something that he thought was cool, the phone would ring at three or four o'clock in the morning and say, [subterranean rasp] 'You know what you played on such-and-such a song? I want you to play that every night'. He was always listening. There was one time when he told me to change a bass-line and I thought to myself, 'You know – he's wrong about this' and over a few weeks, I slowly went back to my old bass-line. And one day, on stage, he just looked at me and said 'Well, goddamn! If you just have to play that bass-line, go ahead!' He was letting me know that he was listening to what I was playing. But he trusted me enough to say 'If you think it works that well, then go ahead and play it'. That's vindication, right there.

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Royal Rumble

Gibson's head of Product Development, Mat Koehler, and Fender historian Terry Foster explain how the two industry titans battled it out over the electric bass in the early days — and changed the course of popular music in the process...

Words: Rod Brakes **Photography:** Olly Curtis, Neil Godwin & Jesse Wild

The post-war period of the early 50s was a time of great innovation. Following major advancements in instrument design after the war, radical developments at Fender saw the release of both the seminal Esquire and Broadcaster by 1950 (renamed the Telecaster in 1951). In 1952, Gibson's Les Paul model similarly heralded the beginning of a new era in guitar building. As creativity flowed between musicians and guitar builders alike, popular culture and music technology moved forward in tandem and a new style of instrument began to take shape, beginning with Fender's Precision Bass in 1951, followed by the Gibson Electric Bass or EB-1 in 1953. As the decade progressed, the electric guitar industry's biggest rivals – Gibson in the east, Fender in the west – began battling it out for their stake in the expanding marketplace of electric basses.

"Commercially, Gibson was playing catch up with Fender from the start," begins Terry Foster, co-author of *Fender: The Golden Age 1946-1970*. "In 1950, the Broadcaster and Esquire came out, and in 1952, the Les Paul came out. It was the same thing when the Precision Bass came out in 1951 and then the EB-1 came out in 1953. That's a large expanse of time. And at that point, there wasn't just the one almighty NAMM trade show twice a year; there were multiple trade shows all over the country. The Gibson representatives would have had a chance to check out those instruments multiple times and see the dealers' reactions. Then they'd go back and say, 'Okay, guys, we need something as well.'"

"The EB-1 was Gibson's first foray into electric bass and it was initiated by Fender's Precision Bass," confirms Mat Koehler, former proprietor of Santa Monica's Holy Grail Guitars and now head of Product Development at Gibson. "The reason they chose the violin shape with the leg extension was because of Les Paul's influence – the bassist in his trio played an upright bass. They were keenly aware of Fender, but [Gibson president] Ted McCarty didn't realise exactly what kind of a competition they were in. The EB-1 did not do well. It was not a commercial success. That's why Gibson later pursued the EB-2 and the EB-0 [released in 1958 and 1959 respectively]."

"It's funny, I was just talking to my Epiphone cohorts here about how Ted was still after Epiphone's upright basses in the late 50s, even when the Precision Bass was pretty standard across the music industry. He did want to counter that with the EB-1 early on, but he was still convinced upright basses were where it's at. The whole Epiphone thing started because Gibson were pursuing upright basses. The craziest story is that when Gibson purchased Epiphone [in 1957], Ted McCarty sent John Huis, his plant manager guy, to New York to evaluate what Epiphone had and oversee the transaction. They both thought they were purchasing Epiphone's upright bass business only, but when John went over there, he reported back to Ted, 'They think we're buying everything – the whole company!' We still have some of those original memos."

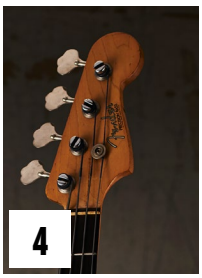
> "YOU COULD ARGUE THAT THE PRECISION BASS HAD MORE OF A CULTURAL IMPACT THAN ANYTHING ELSE FENDER DID"
> **TERRY FOSTER**

Although the Precision Bass was not the first fretted horizontal electric solidbody bass model on the market, having been preceded by Paul Tutmarc's pre-war era instruments, its design was a convincing move away from upright basses and marked a watershed in music history.

"Fender weren't the first to build an electric bass," concedes Terry. "There are some examples that existed before the P-Bass, but they're culturally irrelevant. The Tutmarcs were little short-scale things that didn't play very well, and it's unlikely that Leo Fender or anyone at the company ever saw one. Leo invented that [34-inch] scale length and virtually every [electric bass] design that followed was derived from the Precision Bass. You could even argue that Leo inventing the Precision Bass had more of a cultural impact than anything else Fender did. It spanned virtually every genre of modern music. It would be hard for someone to argue against that.

"It's part of the soundtrack of the 20th century. In the early days when studios were calling for sessions, they asked for someone to either play 'bass', or the 'Fender bass', meaning the electric bass – the two things were synonymous."

"I'm a huge Leo Fender fan," remarks Mat. "And I think he nailed it on the very first try with the P-Bass. Even from Gibson's side I would argue that the Precision Bass is the most influential bass design ever. The fact that you didn't have



CLASSIC BASSES

1. Released in 1951, the original incarnation of Fender's Precision Bass is reminiscent of a Telecaster with its narrow headstock and blonde/blackguard livery. This stunning example is from 1953

2. Gibson's Electric Bass was released in 1953 and came equipped with a detachable telescopic endpin for traditional upright players, as pictured in the case of this example from 1953

3. 1962 Fender Precision Bass: in 1959, Brazilian rosewood slab fretboards superseded fretted maple necks, and tortoiseshell celluloid pickguards were introduced as standard with Sunburst finishes

4. By 1957, with its redesigned headstock shape and the previous addition of rounded body contours, the Precision Bass had taken on a distinctly Strat-like appearance

to lug around an upright bass in your station wagon was a nice plus! It made the bass a lot more accessible for people. It just makes sense."

"It made perfect sense at the time," agrees Terry, "given what people were using for bass. It was the perfect solution to hauling around an enormous double bass, and it was a natural extension of the Fender line, especially once they had the ability to quickly scale things up. Don [Randall, Leo's business partner] was at the trade shows while Leo was in the clubs, and it would have struck them both as being an opportunity. People often think of Leo Fender as being nerdy and introverted, but he wasn't like that at all. He was great at talking to people and he enjoyed getting out there. Being passionate, patient and socially adept enough to have the right conversations with musicians was how a non-musician/designer like Leo navigated that information. Designing it is where the genius comes in."

> "1958 IS THE RED-LETTER YEAR IN GIBSON'S HISTORY... THE ES GUITARS, THE FLYING V, THE EXPLORER AND THE EB-2"
> **MAT KOEHLER**

Not only did the Precision Bass immediately look, sound and feel right to musicians, like so many enduring inventions of the modern era it also solved a few practical problems.

"The Precision Bass was an extremely practical answer to the double bass," says Terry. "First and foremost, the commercial success of the Precision Bass was due to solving the problems of portability, playability and precision. The name was suggested by Don and came about because it's fretted, as opposed to the fretless double bass. It's about precise fretting.

"It's easy to imagine that when the P-Bass arrived, a lot of people who were playing the double bass thought, 'Thank God!' I played the double bass in school

5. Appearing as early as 1960, the EB-2's bridge mute mechanism didn't prove to be a highly popular addition and was often rendered unusable as the rubber contact material perished

6. This EB-2 headstock shows a pearl logo and crown inlays, nickel-plated tuners, a laminated plastic 'bell' truss rod cover, and a black nitrocellulose finish over a holly veneer

and it's a pain in the ass. It's as tall as you are and as fat as two men! And you can't move around much on stage. It is a real struggle to play compared to the P-Bass. Plus you can't be heard easily, especially if the guitars have been amplified – and by that point in time they mostly would have been in one way or another. How do you take a Jaco Pastorius-style lead break in 1950 on one of those double basses? I mean, there were obviously guys who could play the shit out of those things, but once people had the tool that relieved all of those problems, things changed big-time.

"The Precision Bass sparked a revolution. It changed everything. Suddenly, a bass player could be much nimbler. It was the same thing with the Telecaster: suddenly, guitarists had easy and full access to all the notes. It wasn't like it was before where you needed to be a genius bass player to play a complicated bass line. The tools change the rules of the game.

"Before the P-Bass arrived, a lot of bass players more or less played tuba lines, but that changed over time and you see a natural evolution in music from 1951, when the tool became available, to the way Paul McCartney played bass in The Beatles. And you don't have Paul without James Jamerson, right?"

Leo introduced several major alterations to the Precision Bass over the course of the decade, restlessly working to improve upon his original design. "He was constantly tweaking the design," Terry points out. "No other Fender instrument changes so profoundly over the course of its lifespan during Don and Leo's tenure. They added the body contours in '54 when the Strat came out. Then [between '54 and '55] they changed the pickguard [from black to white] and the Blonde finish to a Sunburst [as standard]. By 1957, it had changed to a [gold] anodised [aluminium] pickguard and the headstock shape changes, at which point it looks much more like a Stratocaster than a Telecaster. The new [split] humbucking pickup design [introduced in 1957] was a radical departure from the original, which was a variation of the Broadcaster pickup design."

> "FENDER HAD FEEDBACK FROM THE MARKETPLACE AND WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THAT WORKED FOR JAZZ PLAYERS"
> **TERRY FOSTER**

Hot on Fender's heels shortly after the later incarnation of the Precision Bass arrived in 1957, Gibson struck back with the announcement of its new electric bass guitar design, the semi-hollowbody EB-2, at the now legendary July 1958 NAMM show in Chicago.

"1958 is the red-letter year in Gibson's history," highlights Mat. "I dream about that NAMM show and all the latest things that would've been there: ES guitars, the Flying V, the Explorer… And the EB-2 was a big part of the release as well. Ted McCarty said that in the shows before this, people were snickering that Gibson were still building old man's instruments – this was mainly coming from the West Coast camp. There was definitely a rift in design between the East Coast and the West Coast. The clean California designs in the mid-20th century were a pinnacle of modern minimalism and modernism, whereas Ted felt that Gibson needed to think outside of the box like the rest of the industry and move away from the old-school Michigan furniture building mentality.

"The EB-2 is arguably the greatest bass Gibson ever produced. Larry Allers was

8

the man behind the design of both the EB-2 and the [solid-bodied] EB-0. He was also responsible for designing the SG. The 'sidewinder' or 'mudbucker' humbucking pickup was designed by Walter Fuller, not Seth Lover, in Gibson's electronics division. In terms of number, the shipping figures show that the EB-0 was the most successful bass, but in terms of value as an instrument, I think the EB-2 has the longest enduring appeal and the same goes for the [Epiphone] Rivoli that appeared a year later, in '59; they're basically the same thing. The Rivoli is such a cult classic. It actually sold much better than the EB-2."

Gibson's new basses had barely made a dent in the market when Fender promptly released its new and advanced follow-up to the Precision Bass in 1960, the Jazz Bass.

"The Jazz Bass mirrors the development of the Jazzmaster," explains Terry. "Fender had feedback coming from the marketplace and were looking for something that worked for jazz players. Some people find the J-Bass is easier to play because the strings are closer together, and Fender had the idea that the offset body worked better for people sitting down. Leo tweaked that design quite a bit as well. The initial J-Bass pickups were essentially Jazzmaster pickups. And the Jazzmaster pickups come from the [model 1000 and 800 pedal] steel guitars. The first [prototype] design had three knobs, then it went to two concentric knobs, before going back to the original design [in 1962].

"But the change from maple to rosewood [across the Fender line from 1959] was not really the same sort of tweaking. That was feedback from the marketplace about the maple necks looking worn after a while. Fender thought people would just change the neck, but they totally miscalculated that one. Once the guitar's yours, it's yours, right? Especially when the neck shapes change so much over the years."

7. Gibson's EB-2 was introduced at Chicago's NAMM show in July 1958 and was briefly discontinued in '61, before being reintroduced in '64; it was finally discontinued in the early 70s. This example is from 1966

8. 1964 Epiphone Rivoli: essentially a rebranded version of the Gibson EB-2, Epiphone's Rivoli was introduced in 1959. It was constructed using the same methods and materials at Gibson's Kalamazoo factory

"THE REVERSE THUNDERBIRD DESIGN WAS JUST TOO HARD TO PRODUCE, SO GIBSON MOVED TO NON-REVERSE MODELS"

MAT KOEHLER

Anxious to cash in on the zeitgeist of the early 60s and boost its sales, Gibson decided to take a leaf from Fender's book and embrace the automotive industry's design aesthetics that were so popular with the upwardly mobile electric-guitar-buying youth of the day. The Thunderbird II and IV solid-bodied basses, released in 1963, embodied the angular geometry of classic car design and were suitably available in custom colours – a first for Gibson.

"I personally find the Thunderbird to be one of the coolest basses of all time," enthuses Mat. "Thunderbirds – and Firebirds – were created because Ted McCarty struck up a friendship with [retired car designer] Ray Dietrich, and the decision to use custom colours was because Fender were doing the same thing. I think the custom colour examples are very cool, but that reverse design was just too hard to produce. It's much easier to create the non-reverse variety, and I believe that's mainly why Gibson moved to the non-reverse models [in 1965]. Gibson was able to price the non-reverse models lower and I think they sold much better because of that throughout the late 60s. There was a lot of interesting stuff happening in this industry at Fender and Gibson during that time, and I think some of it was just a direct response to the other."

"I think the Precision Bass was Leo Fender's crowning achievement," concludes Terry. "And his greatest post-Fender achievement is probably the Music Man Stingray bass [introduced in 1976]. You can even argue that had he stayed in charge at Fender, the P-Bass would have morphed into the Stingray bass, because he was constantly tweaking the design and, evidently, that's where he was headed. It seems the bass is what fascinated Leo the most. So the legend goes, the last thing he worked on at G&L – the day before he died – was a six-string bass."

9. 1964 Olympic White Fender Jazz Bass: released in 1960 as an upscaled alternative to the P-Bass, the Jazz Bass features dual pickups and a slimmer neck profile

10. 1964 Gibson Thunderbird II: Gibson's Thunderbird II and IV electric basses were originally released in 'reverse' incarnation in 1963, and were later re-released with a 'non-reverse' design in 1965

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Immediate Lee

The great Lee Sklar, veteran of literally countless sessions, returns with a new project, the Immediate Family. "I'm your gardener!" he tells us...

Interview: Joel McIver

There is no other bass player like Leland 'Lee' Sklar, whose performances you can hear on a frankly incomprehensible 2000-plus albums, from James Taylor, Carole King, Billy Cobham and Jackson Browne to Linda Ronstadt and way beyond that. Of course, Carol Kaye and Chuck Rainey may have performed as many sessions, and others have toured for as many road miles and accompanied similarly big names, but who else combines stage and studio to Sklar's extent?

A forthcoming documentary will be devoted to the Immediate Family, a new band formed of Sklar, Danny Kortchmar (guitar), Waddy Wachtel (guitar), Russ Kunkel (drums) and Steve Postell (guitar). Newcomer Postell aside, the band is a modern reiteration of the Section, the label applied to the other four members since the 70s, when they first made their bones as a state-of-the-art studio ensemble.

This gives us an excuse to catch up with Sklar, like we needed one. Read and learn!

Tell us about the forthcoming Immediate Family film, Lee.
It celebrates the fact that Danny Kortchmar, Russ Kunkel, Waddy Wachtel and I have been together for pretty much 50 years now. We were approached by Denny Tedesco, who directed *The Wrecking Crew* movie in 2008. I've known Denny forever because I worked with his father Tommy Tedesco and all of [the legendary 60s studio team] the Wrecking Crew, when I first started. I was involved in the Q&As when they were showing the Wrecking Crew movie, as I was a guy who worked with them.

There's music on the way, too.
We've just started mixing a new album. We cut 17 tracks at Jackson Browne's studio, and that should be out later this year. Steve Postell is a new addition because he and Danny hooked up and started writing together, and he seemed like a logical fit for this group. It was all based on a Japanese record deal that Danny got; he called his album *The Immediate Family* because we really are like family to each other.

There are parallels between the Immediate Family, the Section and the Wrecking Crew.
Yes, but this film won't be The Wrecking Crew 2, because we're so profoundly different than the Wrecking Crew in the variety of things we've done. They were together about 12 years and they only worked in the studio. [Drummer] Hal Blaine would leave once in a while to work with Frank Sinatra in Vegas or wherever, but basically they were so busy that they stayed in the studio and worked around the clock. We've been on the road with artists, we've written songs with them, we've produced songs with them, and all that – and we're still working together after 50 years instead of 12. It's a different spin, but it's incredibly flattering that these guys came to us and said that they'd like to do this project. I'm excited to see how it turns out. They've interviewed James Taylor, Carole King, Jackson Browne, Lou Adler, Linda Ronstadt, Billy Bob Thornton and others for it.

You must have a near-telepathic understanding with the rest of the band by now.
Sometimes it's a blessing and sometimes it's scary! Especially with Russ. He and I have had a relationship for so many years, projects and tours that we know what the other is going to do. We look at each other on stage, because there's nothing I hate worse than seeing a band on stage that doesn't make eye contact. If you engage with each other, the audience will engage with you. But we can be playing in separate rooms to a click track, and when we compare the tracks, we catch the same fills. Not that it's predictable – we surprise each other a lot.

You've been busy touring lately, with Phil Collins and other artists. What's the current go-to bass setup?
My Warwick with GHS Super Steel roundwound strings, the Dingwalls with Dingwall strings, and Euphonic Audio amps. Warwick have now given me a signature bass, that's modelled on their Star-Bass, which I absolutely love. The major difference with my instrument is that the body shape has a slant where my right arm sits rather than an edge, and the only way we could do that was to build a chambered bass and not a hollow-body. I only have a four-string version of that right now. And with Dingwall, I've been with Sheldon for over 18 years now. I have a Hofner and a few other basses that do various things, but my main road bass is the Dingwall. I only take two basses on tour, because I don't like to change basses in the set for no reason. As for the EA amp, I've loved those for years. I got turned on to their amps years ago. They have a new head called the Professional which I just used with Phil Collins, with a 1x12 and a 4x10 cab. It works great.

You're equally happy with four or five strings?
I take five-strings just in case I need that low note – but I still approach the five-string as if it's a four-string, musically speaking. I try to use the B string only when it's necessary; if you spend too much time down there,

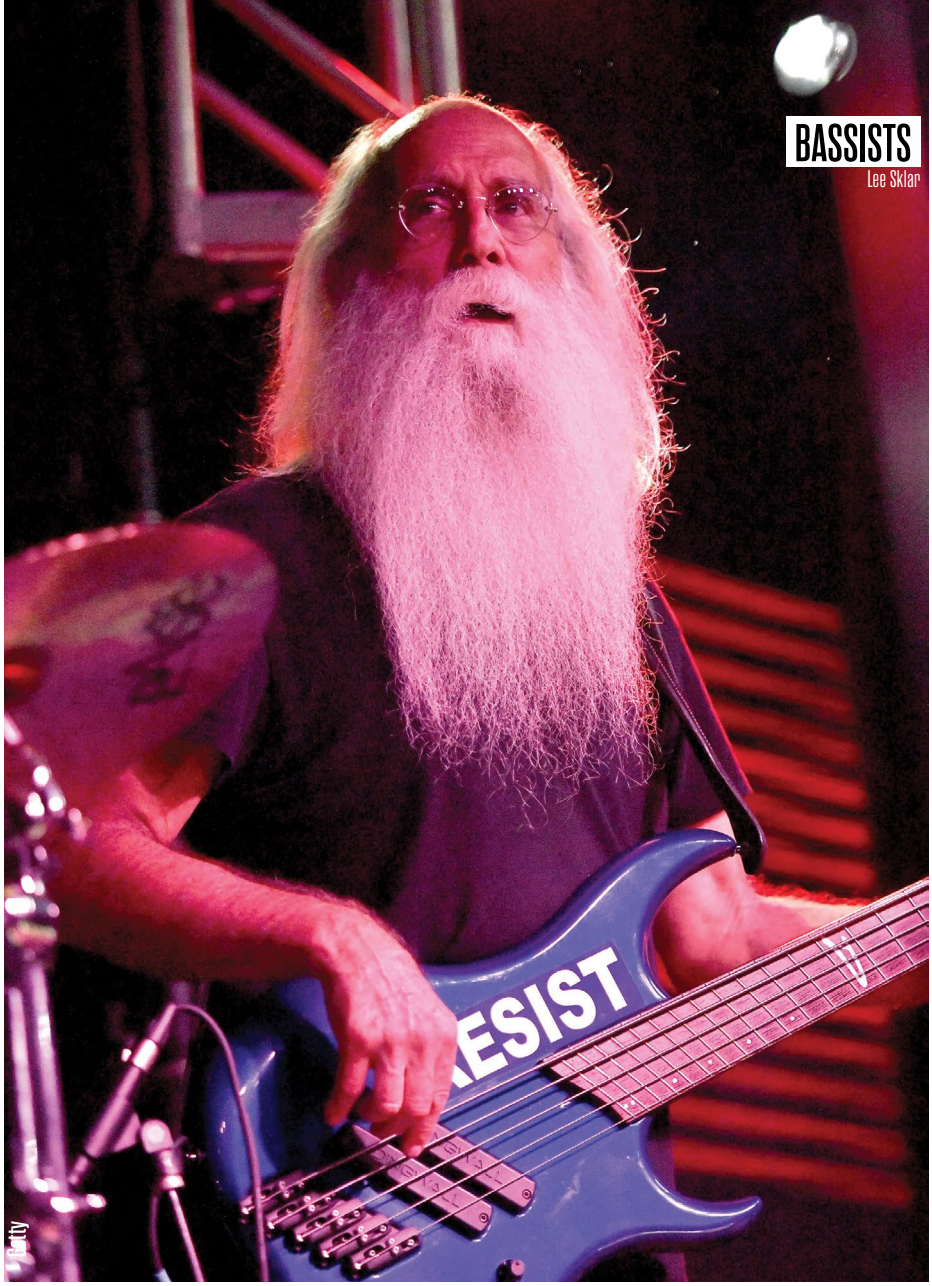
I feel that you create too much of a sonic hole between you and the guitars.

Any effects?
As much as I have pedals sitting here in boxes, I generally don't take any on the road. One thing I do is I carry around a box of little foam blocks, and I use them with roundwounds to get a flatwound sound. I put them between the E and the A strings, and the D and the G strings, to get the sound of a dead old upright. With an octave divider like the Boss OC2, you can get a sound almost like a Mini Moog, because the blocks remove all the overtones and it doesn't glitch nearly as much.

You're often seen at bass shows and other events. Do you enjoy meeting fans of your bass playing?
I do like saying hi to people and doing masterclasses, but I'm never comfortable with adulation. You know, I'm just really happy to be part of the bass community. Every day I go onto Youtube and I see all these amazing players, and I go, 'Christ, I'd be embarrassed to take a bass out in the same room as those guys'. We all know our strengths and weaknesses, and I sit in awe of these guys who have these ridiculous chops and facility. I don't play like that – that's not my interest, for the most part. If I get cornered, I can bullshit my way through it, but I just love playing well-constructed songs.

Have you ever been a full band-member, rather than a session player?
I was in a band called Barefoot Servants back in the early 90s. I was hired to do their record, but I had such a good time that I said 'If you guys need a bass player, I'd love to do this with you'. We did a tour together, and I so wish that that band could have taken off, because it was killer. The business side of it completely failed, unfortunately, and I couldn't afford to do it any more. Other than that, I've always been a hired gun, with Toto or Lyle Lovett and so on. I'm hired help, so to speak. I'm your gardener!

Last time we spoke, you were suffering from a spider bite after doing yard work, so don't jinx yourself by mentioning the garden.
I'm trying not to. Yesterday I had to move some stones that weighed a couple of hundred pounds, and there was nobody else around, so I did it myself and my back is paying the price today. But I got it done, and that's all I care about.



Spider encounters aside, have you generally stayed fit and healthy after so long as a bass player?
Yes, pretty much. It's strange to me that the only major injuries I've had have been to my hands. Why couldn't it be something other than my hands? I've had some ligament injuries and things like that, so maybe some dexterity isn't there any more, in my mind at least, but nobody's ever said to me 'Man, you're not playing up to par', so whatever's going on, no-one's noticed.

How old are you, Lee?
I'll be 73 in May... My God.

I guess certain ailments are simply to be expected at this point.
Yeah, but I feel very fortunate that I've remained active my whole life, I never drank, smoked or did drugs, so I'm completely clean on that level. I haven't eaten meat in years, and I try to live a healthy life. I did a big yard project recently, and I hired a guy to come over and do it. Both his helpers were sick and couldn't come, so I said 'I'll do it with you'. He looked at me and said 'How old are you? You work harder than my assistants!' I've never shied away from hard work, so I feel really good. I have a lot of friends who've had back surgeries, knee replacements and all that. I'm just gonna haul ass as long as I can. The heredity in my family is good – my parents, my grandparents, most everybody lived into their nineties – so I figure I'll be around to annoy people for a few more years, ha ha!

> "NOBODY HAS EVER SAID TO ME 'MAN, YOU'RE NOT PLAYING UP TO PAR'"

www.facebook.com/LelandSklarOfficial

Getty

Wedding Rites

My Dying Bride play heavy — but 'romantic' — metal. Lena Abé is tasked with delivering the lowest of the low end, she tells us...

I started playing bass when I was 10 years old. My dad's a musician, he plays bass and keyboards professionally, so there was always music around when I was a kid. He had a proper 80s-looking Washburn, a white one, and I would watch him play it and think 'How do you do that?' because I would pluck it and it sounded nothing like it did when he played it. So I asked him to teach me to play, and that was my start.

It's a huge advantage for any musician if they have parents who encourage them to play. I didn't have lessons, it was just me and my dad. He set me up with the basics and then I learned myself. He's still gigging at 70 years old, which I think is fantastic.

When I was starting out I admired Cliff Burton, who was a major influence. He played incredible melodies, and the distortion he used just blew me away. Justin Chancellor of Tool, too; I heard their first EP when I was just starting out in the 90s, and I thought 'What on earth is this?' I loved Les Claypool's playing for the same reasons – when I heard *Sailing The Seas Of Cheese*, I had no idea that basses could make that noise. It was weird – sort of playground-like and playful, but also spooky. And then it was Bill Gould as well, I'd never seen playing like that.

I was just in local metal bands before I joined My Dying Bride in 2007. I was only 24, and it was a big step up for me when I joined, but the guys were so professional and they helped me with certain parts. It went pretty smoothly. When I first joined MDB I had an Ibanez six-string, and I got a fair bit of criticism for it. People used to say 'You're in a doom metal band, what do you need six strings for?' but my answer was always 'When I'm at home, I want to play!' It got stolen in an airport.

I recorded the new album, *The Ghost Of Orion*, using a Mayones B5 Gothic, which I love for recording. It's incredible. Everyone who plays it says to me 'Why would you want to play anything else?' I've been endorsed by them since 2008, when they approached us. I hadn't heard of them before that, because they were only in Poland at the time, but they looked great and I thought they'd be worth a shot. As soon as I played them, I was sold.

> "WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING SLOW, IT'S MORE NOTICEABLE IF IT'S NOT BANG-ON. YOU CAN'T JUST MASK IT WITH DISTORTION!"

Apart from the Mayones, I have a Gibson Thunderbird five-string which I like because I play quite low. I move the top strap button away from the neck, so you don't get that neck dive. That's pretty much all I use. I used to have a Warwick bass, which looked fantastic but didn't sound quite right in our band.

I only play five-strings. The necks on four-strings are a bit too thin for me. I like a chunky neck. The low range is essential because the rest of the band tune to C#. I use a pick, every time, for consistency. I played guitar when I was a kid and it made sense to stick with that style. I try to keep it simple but strong, if that makes sense. It doesn't need to be fancy because there's violins and keyboards as well as guitars: it's almost like classical music in that sense. We're not really a traditional heavy metal band. We were at a festival once and Phil Anselmo was there, and said 'You're that romantic death metal band!'

For this album, I recorded all my parts in eight hours and then I was off. Happy days. This album's been a long time in the making; I've got files on my computer called 'New Album 2016'. We'd spent a lot of time rehearsing, so the recordings went down really fast. I write all my own parts, but guitarist Andrew Craighan is the songwriter and the sound of the band is his own. We suggest arrangements and so on, but he does the bulk of the work. He gives us the riffs in the rehearsal room and we tweak it here and there. We don't know where it's going to go until it all comes together. Our attitude is 'We're here now, let's make it sound right while we're together'.

I used an Ampeg SVT in the studio. No effects, just the sound of the bass as it is. The equipment is good enough that you don't need to alter it. I rarely need any overdrive, but when I do I use a Boss pedal. My playing has to be supportive, but I practise the hell out of it because it's got to be really tight. When you're playing slow, it's even more noticeable if it's not bang-on. You can't just mask it with a load of distortion!

The Ghost Of Orion is out now on Nuclear Blast.
Info: www.mydyingbride.net

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Every issue, Guitarist brings you the best gear, features, lessons and interviews to fuel your passion for guitar

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GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of manufacturers and distributors.

When you read about a product here, you're getting a balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me, and remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, Editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

£1149 36

IBANEZ SR2405W-BTL

£1049 £949 40

ASHDOWN GRAIL AND SAINT

£395 44

DARKGLASS MICROTUBES X ULTRA

£1199 £699 42

TRICKFISH BULLHEAD 1K AMP AND TF-112 CABINET

£249 45

HAMSTEAD SUBSPACE INTERGALACTIC DRIVER

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1149
Made In | Indonesia
Colour | Brown topaz burst, low gloss finish
Body | African mahogany core, panga panga and figured maple top
Neck | Panga panga and purpleheart five-piece laminate, 34" scale, satin finish
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 45mm
Fingerboard | Bound panga panga
Frets | 24
Pickups | Aguilar Super Double hum-cancelling pickups x 2
Electronics | Active Ibanez custom 3-band EQ, 9-volt
Controls | Volume, pickup pan, bass, middle, treble/passive tone control, three-way mid-frequency switch (250Hz, 450Hz, 700Hz), active/passive selector switch
Hardware | Gold hardware, Ibanez MR5S monorail bridge, Gotoh machine heads
Weight | 4.2 kg / 9.25 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Gigbag
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Punchy tones
Minus | Might be a bit blingy for some players
Overall | A great looking, great playing bass with plenty of tonal options

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

IBANEZ SR2405W-BTL

Mike Brooks gets up close and personal with this sensibly-priced head-turner

Headstock Distribution
www.headstockdistribution.com

£1149

We've been suitably impressed by various basses from the Ibanez camp over the years – and the sumptuous finishes keep on coming. This SR five-stringer exhibits a rather fetching low-gloss topcoat, somewhere between a high-gloss finish and the smoothness of a satin surface. The hardware looks top-notch, and the electronics package should in theory give the player all the tonal options they could need. But does this SR model cover familiar ground? Read on to find out...

Build Quality

The Brown Topaz finish really stands out alongside the figured maple top, and while some players might not be keen on woody, organic-feeling basses, this SR model looks great, feels fabulous and sits comfortably against the player. The familiar shallow Ibanez body depth works well with the upper and lower horn rounded contours, despite the lack of rear contouring for the player's body. Flipping the body over, the mahogany core looks resplendent in its naturally rich, red colouring. This bass certainly scores in the looks department.

The neck length feels longer than it is, although we can assure you that it's certainly a 34" scale. The panga panga and purpleheart five-piece laminate neck feels rigid, while the neck pocket looks very solid and tightly attached. The neck does feel heavy, and there is some noticeable headstock bias on and off the strap, but it isn't uncomfortable to play. Neck rigidity is further enhanced by titanium rods, which should keep the timbers in order, even burdened with the extra mass required of a five-string neck. The neck profile is slinky with a nut width of 45mm, but the neck depth is slim enough to offset the broadness of the fingerboard.

Hardware and finishing are of a high level throughout. The abalone oval front-facing position markers are an example of this, with white dots sitting along the side edge, as is the recessed jack socket along the lower body edge. The gold Ibanez monorail bridge units and Gotoh machine heads work well and the bridge units allow three-way adjustments to be made. The control set looks a little fussy, but it isn't in pratice. Volume and pickup pan controls are backed up by a three-band EQ, a three-band mid-frequency selector switch and an active/passive switch. The treble control acts as a passive tone control in passive mode.

Sounds And Playability

Ibanez basses are well known for having a fair degree of snap to their tone, and this bass has that as well as a standout low-mid bias which offers a woody rasp. Hooked up to an Aguilar Tone Hammer, the bass has a naturally organic tone, but the Ibanez EQ has equal amounts of power and finesse across all the frequencies. Power and depth in the bottom end are supplemented with a punchy mid-range across all three mid-EQ bands – 250Hz, 450Hz and 700Hz. The treble response is equally impressive. It isn't excessive in any way, but it does give the player plenty of glassy sparkle.

The passive performance is also impressive, and although it doesn't quite have the sonic punch that the active EQ offers, the natural response works in its favour. The woody bark courtesy of the timbers, alongside the Aguilar Super Double pickups and passive tone control, provide some rich passive tones. Pick players will find plenty of useful tones to play with, while fingerstyle and slap-and-tap fiends will not be left wanting – this SR model caters for all musical styles and techniques.

The 18mm string spacing can be adjusted at the bridge should you choose to change it, but overall this is a bass which was designed with playability in mind: this latest iteration of the SR design ticks all of the boxes in that respect. Comfort comes courtesy of the sleekly-designed neck, and as five-string basses go, this is a mighty fine example.

Conclusion

We're pleased to say that this Ibanez is an impressive instrument: a fine addition to the range. It will catch the eye of newcomers and seasoned veterans alike.

ASHDOWN
Grail and Saint

Amp-makers Ashdown step into bass guitar world with this Dan Lakin-designed range of workhorse instruments. Phil Mann steps up for a test

Ashdown Engineering
www.ashdownmusic.com

£1049, £949

The prospect of taking a seminal instrument design and then attempting to make your own unique version, after nearly 70 years of evolution, is a bleak prospect for more than a few luthiers. However, that's not been the case for Mark Gooday and his team at Ashdown Engineering, who have teamed up with the revered Dan Lakin – formerly of Lakland – to produce what can only be described as a formidable range of instruments.

Build Quality

Straight from their Ashdown-branded gigbags, these basses appeal thanks to their high-gloss polyurethane finishes and matching headstocks. The Grail avoids any potentially cumbersome attributes seen with some mid-priced five-string basses with a beautifully shallow, D-shaped neck. The multi-layered birchwood oil finish makes it feel more expensive than it actually is, with detailing such as a 46.5mm bone nut (44.5mm on the Saint) and Ultralite Hipshot tuners. Tried-and-tested components and materials have been used elsewhere in the construction, suggesting that these are instruments built to last many hard hours on stage.

Sounds And Playability

When played acoustically, you immediately feel strong resonance throughout the entire body of each of these instruments, partly due to the quality of the lightweight alder that's been used during the production process. Once plugged in, you'll find that understanding the instrument's control plate doesn't require a degree, as it simply houses two 250k volume pots for the neck and bridge pickups, plus a passive tone control.

However, don't be misled by this humble exterior – once plugged in, these basses reveal themselves as true wolves in sheep's clothing and bark into life once the custom-wound pickups enter the signal chain. Whatever recipe Lakin used in the winding and production of these units, it's worked – their tonality is excellent.

The Grail's pair of single-coils are sonic utopia. When working in conjunction with one another they emit a dense passive tonality, naturally rich in the low midrange, yet still capable of emitting glassy top end when required for vibrant slap tones. Roll the neck pickup off and you enter the realm of Jaco tonality; dissipate the bridge pickup and your inner funk player begins to emerge.

In the case of the Saint, isolating the P-bass style split coil allows the user to access a warm, deep tonality reminiscent of that traditional Jamerson thud. However, the additional J-Bass single-coil offers the user more degrees of clarity, begging the question of whether this bass would be just as comfortable in a studio as it would be on a live stage.

As for playability, with its traditional J-bass offset body profile, the Grail has an immediate air of familiarity about it, with the instrument proving particularly comfortable to play, seated or standing. Although the Saint appears a little more unconventional in its design, its slightly undersized profile nestle neatly against the player's body.

Although the Wilkinson bridge proves more than sufficient for the anchoring needs of each instrument, there's not a surface-mounted bass guitar in production that wouldn't benefit from a high-mass bridge with string-through construction. In the case of the Grail, this is notable, as at times the instrument's B-string can lose definition as you ascend the fretboard – but this is one thorn among a dozen roses.

Conclusion

This is a well thought-out, designed and constructed range of instruments. Apart from perhaps a minor tweak to the bridge configuration in the case of the Grail, the only negative issue that these basses will have to contend with is the saturation of the market at this price point. Thankfully, they've made a positive impression, with James Johnston opting to employ them on the next Biffy Clyro tour. Although the competition is keen, few bass manufacturers will be able to match this build quality and these sonic capabilities at this price, so do investigate further.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ASHDOWN GRAIL
Price | £1049 (RRP inc VAT)
Made In | Korea
Body | Lightweight alder
Neck | Maple
Neck Joint | Bolt-on
Nut Width | 46.5mm
Scale | 35"
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 21
Pickups | Ashdown Custom Wound Single Coil x 2
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, Volume, Tone
Hardware | Hipshot Ultralite tuners, Wilkinson bridge
Weight | 4.5kg / 9.9 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Yes
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | The pricetag
Minus | The Grail's B-string could be clearer in the upper register
Overall | Sonically outstanding, a true passive J-Bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ASHDOWN SAINT
Price | £949 (RRP inc VAT)
Made In | Korea
Body | Lightweight alder
Neck | Maple
Neck Joint | Bolt-on
Nut Width | 44.5mm
Scale | 34"
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 20
Pickups | Ashdown Custom Wound (1 x split coil, 1 x single coil)
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, Volume, Tone
Hardware | Hipshot Ultralite tuners, Wilkinson bridge
Weight | 4kg / 8.8 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Yes
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Sonic versatility
Minus | Body shape might not be for everyone
Overall | A fantastic tool for stage and studio

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

TRICKFISH

Bullhead 1K Amp and TF-112 Cabinet

There's a new kid on the amplification block and it's making serious waves. Mike Brooks takes a dip with the Trickfish

Trickfish Amplification
www.trickfishamps.com

£1199
£699

Originally founded in 2014, Trickfish have begun to make some serious inroads into the amplification market over the past few years, and this Bullhead 1K amplifier is the brand's flagship model. Built in the USA, with input from renowned designer Mike Pope towards its design, this amp and the supplied 1x12 cabinet claim to offer supreme tonal sculpting coupled with noiseless performance. As one might expect, gear of this quality isn't cheap – but it's not out of reach, either. So what do you get for your outlay?

Build Quality

Both units suggest simplicity and quality: the cabinet speaks for itself, while the amp is simply laid out, with side venting on either side of the turquoise and black aluminium chassis. The control set is fairly obvious, with a four-band EQ section, selectable shelved frequencies and all of the expected connections front and back. The controls are sizeable, so there's no chance of getting lost under poor stage lighting and although the amp features some illuminating LEDs for the frequency selector buttons, they don't detract from what is a classy-looking unit. The brushed silver controls feel extremely solid and operate smoothly across the whole turn, which is reassuring. The Input Level indicator provides a point of reference with regard to the overall Gain level of your signal.

The TF-112 cabinet is made from Baltic birch and comes covered in sharkskin vinyl, complete with a 16-gauge steel grille, a recessed metal handle on the top of the cab for transportation, metal corners and detachable rubber feet. It's a simple design, likely to be effective across the full frequency range, utilising a 12-inch Eminence Neodymium driver and a high-frequency horn.

When turning the amp on, the power-up sequence runs a test before switching the amp into Mute mode; this protects the attached speaker. Determine the hotness of your bass signal using the Hi/Lo selector, which offers a +/-9dB setting; set your Gain level using the Input Level indicator; and you're ready to add EQ as required.

Sounds

With both the amp and cabinet set flat, the tone projects well, whether using passive or active instruments. The amp in particular is extremely quiet, with very little background or performance noise during operation. The basic tone is punchy without being excessive, and the bottom end is solidly defined, offering plenty of power and projection.

Approaching the EQ requires some experimentation, as the shelving frequencies offer markedly different tone responses: getting to know how each frequency reacts to the others is advised. The tonal quality on offer is generally impressive, but

the Mid section is worthy of extra note, with four shelved frequencies to select from. You may find that selecting the upper frequency of the Hi Mid control makes the Treble control redundant, depending on the tone you're seeking and the bass you're using.

The cabinet will no doubt appeal to those players who like a one-cab solution – but to get the most from this amp, I suggest you consider a multi-cab setup so that the amp can push some air and breathe a little, or perhaps a multi-driver cabinet such as a 2x12 or 4x10. Having said that, this configuration is no shrinking violet and the levels on offer are impressive. Bringing the high-frequency horn into play opens up all sorts of detail and added finesse to your sonic performance, should you require it.

The signal remains tight and responsive throughout; pick playing sounds authoritative, while fingerstyle examples benefit from the punchy midrange and thick, rounded tones afforded by the Bass EQ. You may find the 30Hz option a little too thick if you require articulate definition: again, this might be determined more by the bass you choose to use. There is a switchable mute option at the rear of the amp, but a footswitch is not included.

Conclusion

There's no denying that this is impressive gear. If you're looking to upgrade your amplification or you simply want to try something new, I can highly recommend these models, especially the amplifier. Audition and be impressed.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

TRICKFISH BULLHEAD 1K BASS AMPLIFIER

Price | £1199
Made In | in USA
Power | 1000 watts @ 8/4 ohms
Features | Features ¼" jack Input, Hi/Lo Input selector (+/-9dB), Gain (with Input Level indicator), Bass, Bass Frequency selector (40Hz/80hz), Low Mid, Low Mid Frequency selector (333Hz/473Hz), Hi Mid, Hi Mid Frequency selector (1kHz/1.8kHz), Treble, Treble Frequency selector (4kHz/8kHz), Master Volume, Mute switch, 3.5mm Aux In input, ¼" jack Headphone output, 2 x Neutrik Speakon/ Jack output sockets, FX Loop Series/ Parallel switch, FX Loop Ground/Lift switch, ¼" jack Send/Return sockets, 1/4-inch jack Tuner output socket, ¼" jack Mute footswitch input, Direct out Level, Direct Out Pre/Post EQ selector, Balanced XLR DI output socket, Ground/Lift switch
Dimensions | 95mm / 3.7" (H) x 395mm / 15.5" (W) x 225mm / 8.9" (D)
Weight | 2.8 kg / 6.2 lbs

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

TRICKFISH TF-112 CABINET

Price | £699
Made In | in USA
Power | 300 watts @ 8 ohms
Impedance | 8 ohms
Frequency Response | 35Hz-16kHz
Speakers | 1 x 12" Eminence Neodymium speaker and 1 x HF driver 80 degree conical horn, with HF Level control
Connections | 2 x NL2 Neutrik Speakon/ Jack sockets
Dimensions | 395mm / 15.5" (H) x 485mm / 19" (W) x 465mm / 18.3" (D)
Weight | 16.4 kg (36.2 lbs)

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A fine array of tones, keenly priced
Minus | A lot of competition – and the cab can only do so much
Overall | A fully-featured, powerful amp and a highly portable cab

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

DARKGLASS
Microtubes X Ultra

The latest pedal from Darkglass is another mighty Microtubes. Let's rock, suggests Brooks

Audio Distribution Group
www.audiodistributiongroup.com

£395

There's no disputing that Darkglass has given the rock and metal community what it wants. Their latest product is a DI box, a silent practice pedal, a distortion and an EQ unit all in one. It's feature-packed, with Aux-In and headphone sockets, XLR and jack inputs and outputs, a cabinet simulator to warm the XLR output up a little, and a novel Micro USB B socket for connection to a PC/Mac. This allows the user to make use of the Darkglass Suite software, which enables you to configure the pedal, load virtual cabinet profiles and download firmware updates.

The front end is extremely user-friendly, with all the controls laid out intuitively. There are controls for compression and drive, low and high levels, low and high pass filters, master, low and high shelving frequencies and a four-band EQ. The bottom end of your signal is compressed to maintain the bass frequencies, while the top end is distorted, as and when you choose to call upon the CMOS distortion circuitry. The EQ, master and shelving controls are lit with red LEDs when called upon: these can be bypassed using the Bypass stomp switch, as can the distortion.

The tones on offer are solid and raucous, as we've come to expect from various Darkglass products. When it comes to modern distortion tones, the firm are among the leading exponents, and we're pleased to report that the X Ultra is everything you could want from that area. The level of tonal manipulation available is superb, giving the player optimum control: should you find some of the overtones or resonances a little too much, winding the problematic frequencies in is relatively easy. Your bass frequencies are maintained at all times, and if you need to clean that side of things up to project through a heavy band mix, you have options at your disposal. These are particularly beneficial if you play in dropped tunings where low string tension might cause resonance and harmonic issues.

The unit is particularly useful if you need to practice silently, with additional PC/Mac/Aux-In connections and a 3.5mm headphone output. Using the Cab Sim option warms up the bass signal impressively, so if recording or private practice on the fly is required, this unit is a workable alternative to a cabinet. At £395, it isn't cheap, but it's versatile and will no doubt solve many requirements for a large swathe of the bass community. Definitely worth auditioning.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £395
Made In | Finland
Features | Low Comp, Low Level, High Level, High Drive, Low Pass (50Hz, 250Hz, 500 Hz), High Pass (100Hz, 500Hz, 1kHz), Master (+/-12dB), Low Shelf (+/-12dB @ 80Hz), 250Hz/500Hz/1.5kHz/3kHz (+/-12dB), High Shelf (+/-12dB @ 5kHz), Distortion selector stomp button, Bypass stomp button, ¼" jack Input socket, ¼" jack Output socket, Balanced XLR DI output, Ground Lift selector, Cab Sim selector, 3.5mm Aux-In input, 3.5mm Headphone output, Micro USB B socket
Dimensions | 125mm x 96mm x 57mm / 4.9" x 3.8" x 2.2"
Power | 9 volt DC power supply
Weight | 430g / 15oz

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Versatility, tone range, component quality
Minus | Some players may find it too complicated – and it's pricey
Overall | Another high-quality winner from Darkglass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

HAMSTEAD

Subspace Intergalactic Driver

Ready to go Intergalactic? The Editor readies his (moon) boot

Hamstead Soundworks
www.hamsteadsoundworks.com/subspace

£249

Why spend a sum equivalent to two new tyres for your van on a distortion pedal? Nowadays you can buy a noisy plastic stompbox from crappedals.com for the cost of a set of strings, pretty much. The answer is, of course, the same as it's always been, which is to say that 1) a cheap pedal will give you a very short list of tone options, and 2) it will snap into 50 pieces when (not if) your intoxicated guitar player steps on it.

This leads us to the Subspace Intergalactic Driver, made by pedal designer Peter Hamstead and his team. With a name like that, we were hoping that it would be powered by dilithium crystals or at least a flux capacitor, but no, what we have here is simply a solid, all-analogue overdrive that gives the user a huge array of filthy sounds to play with.

The big knobs are mostly self-explanatory: Bass and Treble are the EQ, offering +/-18dB of boost, while Gain and Level do the obvious job. The latter offers 38dB of extra level and will make you jump if you roll it on too fast, so watch out. Parallel allows you to cut or boost the amount of dry signal, and Tone and Treble both affect the top frequencies in different ways. There's an obvious tone difference when you compare them at maximum and minimum, but describing varying distortion profiles is tricky without using words like 'squishy' and 'hollow', so check the Hamstead YouTube channel for a clearer picture.

The real key to this unit is its tone-shaping, managed with three miniswitches. These give you a ton of options, far more in fact than a monkey brain like mine can easily handle. The C1/C2/C3 switch determines the shape of the overall clipping: I found that C2 retained a dramatic amount of low end, but that C1 was smoother overall. The PR/EQ/PO switch places the drive before or after the EQ, or in clean boost mode if you wish; this is where really subtle tone-tweaking can take place if you so desire.

The real Neanderthal fun comes with the X1/X2/X5 switch, which boosts your input level up to five times. On X5 the volume leap is huge, so watch out for your cab, neighbours, pets and nearby glassware. You can add an optical OptoKick footswitch if you want, but why would you?

The HSID is made of solid metal, the knobs and switches are suitably heavyweight and it sounds killer, so the only minor whine in this review is that it doesn't come with a power supply. Still, you can't have everything, and it does come with a five-year warranty and a nice velvety bag to carry it around in. Do investigate.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £249
Made In | UK
Features | Tone, Bass, Treble, Gain, Parallel, Level rotary pots, three tone-shaping miniswitches, -10dB pad, internal power up bypass selector
Dimensions | 70mm x 130mm x 65 mm / 2.8" x 5.1" x 2.6"
Weight | 550g / 1.2 lbs
Power | 9V DC, not supplied

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A host of tone-shaping options; solid build
Minus | None
Overall | Fully-featured drive pedal with tons of power

BGM RATING

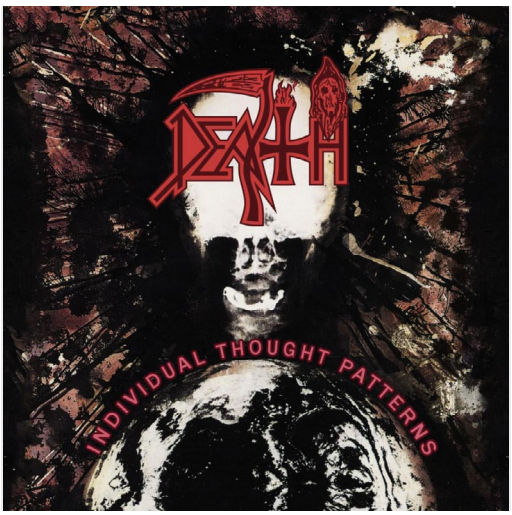
BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

STAR BASS

Each month we celebrate the great — and rather less great! — work of an acclaimed bass player. This month: Steve Di Giorgio

Words: Joel McIver Image: Getty

Heavy metal and the fretless bass made for uneasy bedfellows until the late 80s, when Steve Di Giorgio (born 1967) made a cult following for himself with the Californian thrash metal band Sadus. Subsequent albums with Death elevated his stature to that of an extreme metal icon, thanks to his complex, progressive playing, which he has deployed on a host of sessions worldwide ever since. He has played a wide variety of bass guitars over the years, from ESP and Ibanez to an attention-grabbing custom three-string made by Thor Bass. Now a member of the veteran metallers Testament, Di Giorgio can most recently be heard on their new album, *Titans Of Creation*.



MUST-HAVE ALBUM

Death – Individual Thought Patterns (1993)

"This album put me on the map, because it just hit the world in the right way. I built the bass that I played on this record myself, out of parts, back in 1988. I didn't carve the wood, but I did the rest myself. I had a Fender Precision copy when I was really young, and the body survived, so I bought a neck through the Fender catalogue – but the only fretless neck they had was to Jazz specifications, so it became a P body with a J neck. I installed a Bartolini split pickup, routed in a bridge pickup and added a Badass II bridge. I played that bass with Autopsy and Sadus and then on this album. I used Rotosound strings – I've been a loyal user of those strings for 37 years. I've spent my whole career since then trying to outdo this album, not in a sports kind of way, but just to show people that I can play bass better at the age of 52 than I could when I was 25."

WORTHY CONTENDER

Testament – Titans Of Creation (2020)

"This is a metal album where the bass will make the bass world happy! I'm very proud of it. The tone is good, the playing's good, everything's good about it. When I was young, I thought I had to be this organic, play-what-I-feel kind of bassist, but I realised at some point that I should really play what someone wants for a change! When I first played with Testament in 1998, they already had an established sound, so I played exactly what the session called for, once I'd figured out what the right bass was for the band. My playing is completely supportive, because on this record it's all about the tone, the feeling and the pocket. I know those things are boring to some bass players, but to be in a band of Testament's stature, and to receive comments across the board about the bass parts, means that I did my job."

COOL GROOVES

Sadus – Out For Blood (2006)

"I'm so proud of this record. I was on a creative tear at the time, and I wrote a lot of the songs on it, not wishing to take away from the other guys' contributions. The album is an adventure because the bass is all over the place, and I also played sitar and synths. People liked the album, but Sadus was always at cult level – we never broke out of relative obscurity. This record was a culmination of all the things that were good about our band. We were always known for playing super-fast, but the early stuff was so speedy that we had to eventually slow down so that people could enjoy it. I wouldn't have made it into Death if Chuck [Schuldiner, Death] hadn't befriended Sadus, or made it into Testament if I hadn't been in Death – so in a way my whole career comes back to this band."

WILD CARD

Vintersorg – Visions From The Spiral Generator (2002)

"This album has some amazing bass parts. It's very creative, a crazy musical adventure. It has black metal sections, but overall it's an experimental folk-ish sound. I came in there and they gave me the freedom to explore the music, but also to push its limits. They had the confidence to know that the songs would still be their songs. Chuck was the same: he wanted me to do what I do best. Sometimes, when I'm offered a gig, I ask them, 'What kind of bass do you want? Do you just want my name on your album, or do you want my sound and style?' A lot of times that makes or breaks the gig for me. I also did their next album, *The Focusing Blur* (2004), and that has one of my favourite bass-lines I've ever done. Those two records go together, for me."

AVOID AT ALL COSTS

Death – Human (1991)

"This album was recorded with a couple of musicians from Cynic, which made it a very talent-heavy line-up. I had to raise my game to match theirs. It was some of the most incredible stuff I have ever pulled off, and the band was happy with it – but the big disappointment came in the final mix. Not that I needed to be seduced to come back and record with Death, but one of the big enticing factors was Chuck saying 'We're gonna do you right in the mix this time'. Still, things happen around the mix that influence things. This is a very personal thing for me to say, but it's true – even though it's hard to convince people that it's true, because any time you have a conversation with someone and they pass away, the conversation always favours you – but Chuck told me that he wanted to remix *Human* to remedy the bass being inaudible. That eventually happened in 2011, I'm glad to say."

BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in... **Joel McIver, editor**

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across nearly two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners 50

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he's now a busy international freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with double Grammy Award-winning guitarist Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year since 2012 and is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while also lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

Intermediate 56

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for *BGM* since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced 60

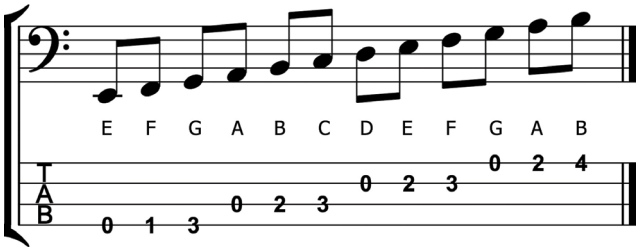
BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

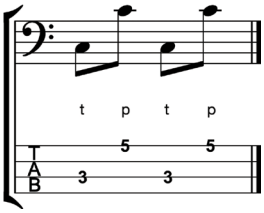
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

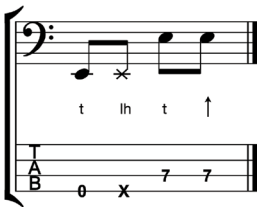


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



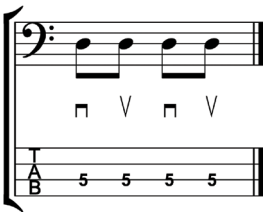
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



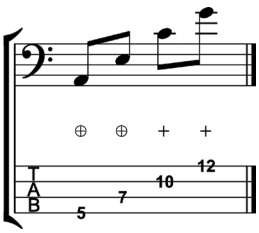
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

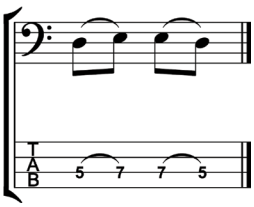
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

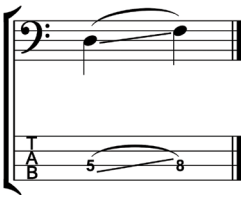
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



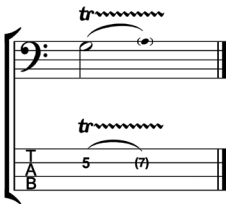
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



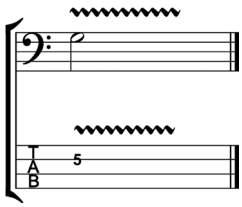
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

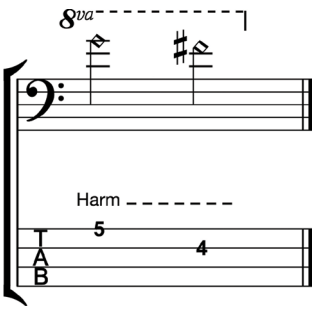
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

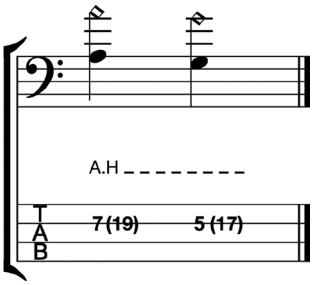
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

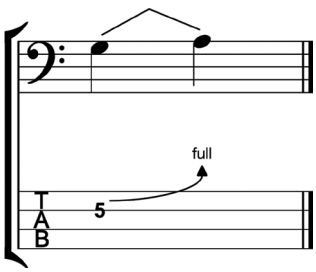
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

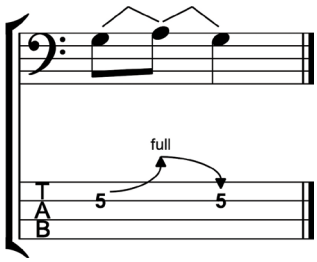
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand's thumb to the note in brackets

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners' Tutorial

Tag-team your practice, advises beginners' guru Steve Lawson

Welcome back! I hope you're all staying healthy and positive during the current pandemic-related upheaval. For those of you who practise with a band, or if you're at the stage of playing live gigs, the requirement to be physically separate from each other for the time being will have brought all of those plans to a grinding halt. My various social media feeds have been full of people trying to find novel strategies for getting creative – either to develop their craft, or to perform and create in new ways – with varying degrees of success.

This month, let's look at some interesting ways to practise while remaining safely isolated. So much of the solo practice that we do is about getting things prepared so we can then try them out in a setting with other musicians. Once that destination is taken away, we need to think about other possible ways to express the things we've learned, and work together with our bandmates.

One of the most common suggestions is to perform live-streaming gigs, and understandably so, as many musicians' first reaction to venues closing is to try and move the performance online. However, doing it well takes a whole lot of practice and tech insight, and for those who are still practising, web-streaming an hour of you running through exercises might not be exactly what your Facebook friends are looking for.

Getty

Still, there are ways to use social media to focus our practice. Instagram's limit of one minute for each video clip can give us a really useful set of parameters for trying an exercise out and recording it. Go back through previous issues of this magazine (digitally, if you don't have the print copies to hand), re-read the exercises on these pages and choose the ones you feel most comfortable with. Then set yourself the task of filming 30 seconds or a minute of you playing them – this can really help to focus the mind.

We're sometimes told that putting videos of ourselves online is a sign of narcissism, but actually it's a brilliant way to get to hear ourselves through the ears of our potential audience. I've often found that things that I loved when it was just me listening to them made far less sense when I sat with someone else and listened to them together. The same goes for posting online. We suddenly become aware of the shortcomings in our playing, and if we harness that feeling correctly, it can be a great motivator to fix some of those problems – whether they're timing, tone or technique-related – in order to get the video done.

> "INSTAGRAM'S LIMIT OF ONE MINUTE FOR EACH VIDEO CLIP GIVES US A USEFUL SET OF PARAMETERS FOR TRYING AN EXERCISE AND RECORDING IT"

Getty

Another useful thing here – especially at the front end of your journey with the bass – is that we have to consider how we're going to film our playing, and how to get the best sound. Learning how to position your phone and amp in relation to one another, in order to get the best possible tone with no distortion from overloading your mic, is crucial. It's a really good way to get you thinking about the importance of mic placement in the capturing of your bass sound. You may also decide to film on your laptop, and record the audio direct. This is also a really useful skill to develop, as it will make it way easier for you to apply your newly-developed bass skills to collaborative recordings.

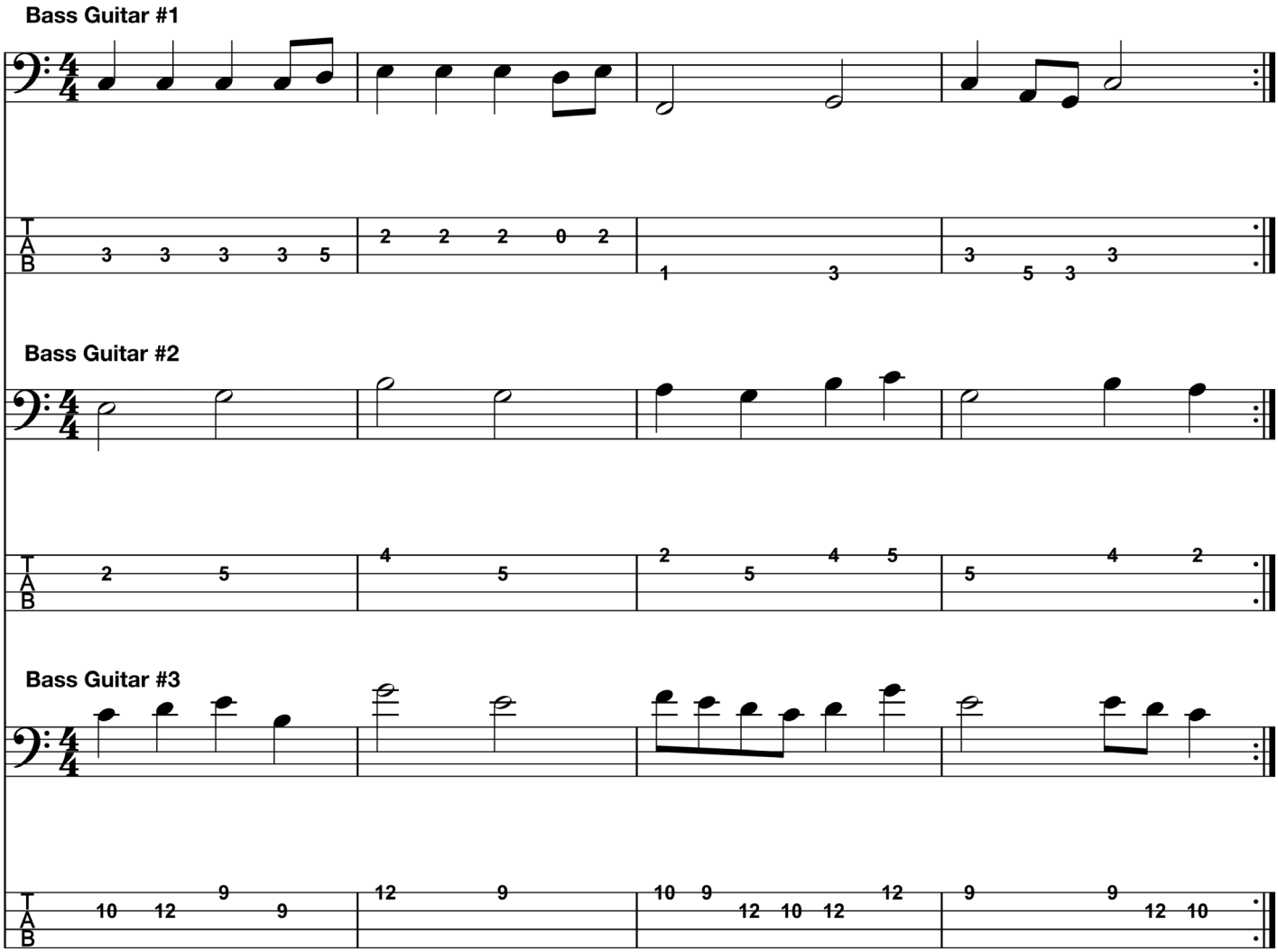
The principle here is to see every aspect of our creative lives as a lesson. There are so many aspects of our awareness of music that can be improved by making a compelling 30-second video of an exercise we learned from a magazine. Being a musician now is not like it was 35 years ago, when I got my first bass. The context that we're preparing ourselves for may end up being a primarily digital audience, and recording yourself is therefore a much bigger component of our musical journey.

After working on an exercise from the last few issues of this column, try picking a couple of classic bass-lines that you can record and present via Instagram or Facebook. From 'Papa Was A Rolling Stone' to 'Walking On The Moon', 'Psycho Killer' to 'Seven Nation Army', there are so many instantly recognisable lines. These will make great ear training when you work out how to play them, and provide you with a way of playing things that even your non-musician friends will recognise and enjoy.

"But Steve," you say, "what if I'm not ready to present my playing to the public?" That's a perfectly fair point. I'm not a fan of pushing people into doing things they aren't ready for. Some of my students at BIMM in Birmingham set up a WhatsApp group and swapped videos of themselves playing the bass pieces for their end-of-year assessments. Peer review and feedback is a significant part of any meaningful learning journey, and as bassists we rarely get together with other players of our level to swap tips and give encouragement. In that sense, being

"THE PRINCIPLE HERE IS TO SEE EVERY ASPECT OF OUR CREATIVE LIVES AS A LESSON. PEER REVIEW AND FEEDBACK IS A SIGNIFICANT PART OF ANY MEANINGFUL JOURNEY"

Example 1



isolated is a great time to find a couple of other friends who also read this column and start a mutual support group.

One thing I ask my students to do when they're giving each other feedback is to offer three things that they like about a performance, plus one thing to focus on for further development. As a beginner, it's easy to list all the things that you're dissatisfied with in your own playing, so it's important to start out with encouragement, and then to find the one thing you need to go away and work on. This helps you focus your practice time while staying enthusiastic about playing. After all, getting together with other people to practise should be motivating – or we might as well stay isolated!

Of course, this kind of practice offers another opportunity to think about how you record your playing. If you're focusing on technique, it may be good for you to use video so that your fellow students can see how you're playing a particular line.

> "THE SCRUTINY OF RECORDING IS SUCH A VALUABLE PART OF PRACTISING. IF YOU HAVE A LOOPER PEDAL, YOU'LL HAVE EXPERIENCED ONE BENEFIT ALREADY..."

In addition, it may be a chance to start thinking about how you record your bass sound when you're not worried about video. If you've got an external sound card, there's a whole lot of research you can do into how to make the most of it, how to make sure it doesn't overload the input while still getting a good signal-to-noise ratio. This means the relative level of your bass sound to the background noise generated by the recording process.

There are a few fun things that you can do to double up your remote practice routine as a recording exercise. As we've mentioned before, YouTube is full of drum tracks at different tempos and in different styles, and a lot of them have download links for the original audio. You and your friends can choose a drum track and all record something against it: this can be a great way to compare your approaches to a particular task. It could be one of the exercises from this column, or a classic bass-line, or you could simply set a chord progression and each try to write and record a bass-line using it.

The scrutiny of recording is such a valuable part of practising. If you practise with a looper pedal, you'll have experienced one benefit already – the

opportunity to sit back from the task of actually playing the music and hear what it was that you did. When recording yourself, it can take time and practice to get the recording to accurately reflect what it was you actually played, but it's time well spent, and isolation is the perfect time to develop those skills. They will serve you well throughout your music life.

Let's finish today's column with a four-bar etude for three beginner bassists. If you're out of isolation, you can arrange this with two other friends, or you can do it as a round-robin recording exercise. Or, if you fancy the challenge, you can record all three parts. None of them requires a high level of dexterity, but all of them require attention to simple details such as timing and note length. If you get it right, it will sound like it was culled from a game soundtrack: program it into MuseScore and the MIDI bass sound is perfect for old-school gaming! Notice the repeat bars at the end – this is designed to be played at least twice.

The third part is the highest-pitched of the three, and requires a little bit of effort to read thanks to all those ledger lines. Don't be afraid to use the tab to help out, even if you're trying to get your reading together. Alternatively, write in the note names above the higher ledger lines: even top studio pros do this with tricky parts. There are no extra points for making life hard for yourself, and sometimes we all need to work out what the important thing is to focus on for now. There'll be time for sight-reading ledger lines at a later date!

So, this month, see if you can assemble your own team of bass avengers, and work out how best to practise when you can't be in the same place. These are considerations that are likely to help you in your everyday music life. The ancillary skills related to recording and videoing yourself, and using your audience and peers as a sounding board, will serve you throughout your music journey.

My early music life was spent fooling about with cassette recorders and keyboards with built-in rhythm generators, trying to make the most interesting music I could with those and a bass. Those early experiments still feed directly into the kind of thing I spend my days doing now, 35 years later. Have fun, stay curious, and I'll see you online!

> "THERE ARE NO EXTRA POINTS FOR MAKING LIFE HARD FOR YOURSELF. SOMETIMES WE NEED TO WORK OUT WHAT THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO FOCUS ON FOR NOW"

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Intermediate Tutorial

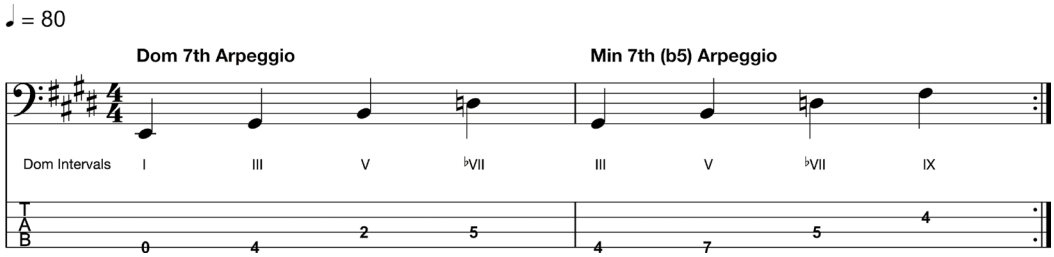
PHIL MANN

Subordinate substitutions, you say, Phil? Tell us more...

Hello! Studying vocabulary can always potentially throw up a few hazards, particularly in the application of practice time. It's not that you won't develop any number of positive attributes from running up and down any number of completely random scales – the increase in dexterity will prove beneficial to most of us. It's just that we should be spending more time asking why we're doing something and what the long-term goals are. A good example of this could be the time spent learning structures such as the Min7th (♭5) arpeggio, also known as 'half diminished', as it's not something that we come into contact with on a day-to-day basis. It's not a chord type that we'll hear in most Bruno Mars tunes, for example – so is it a good use of practice time?

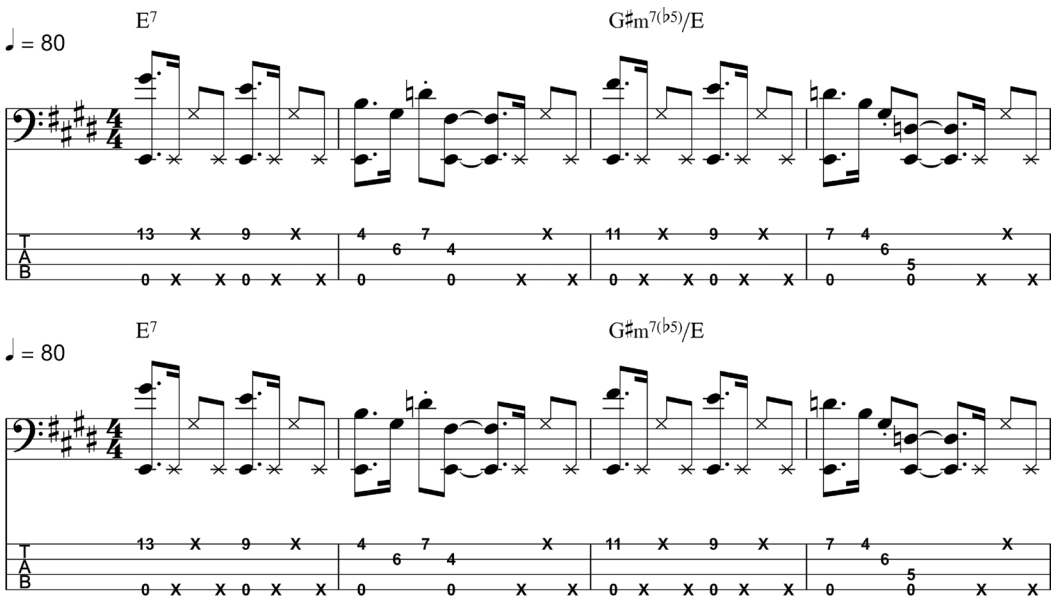
Example 1

This is where subordinate substitutions can become a real game-changer! The concept allows you to generate practical use out of those slightly less employable arpeggios. For example, playing a Dom 7th arpeggio in root position allow you to access the Root, Major 3rd, Perfect 5th and ♭7th chord tones, but if we employ the aforementioned Min7th (♭5) arpeggio of the 3rd degree, we're now able to access the 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th intervals.



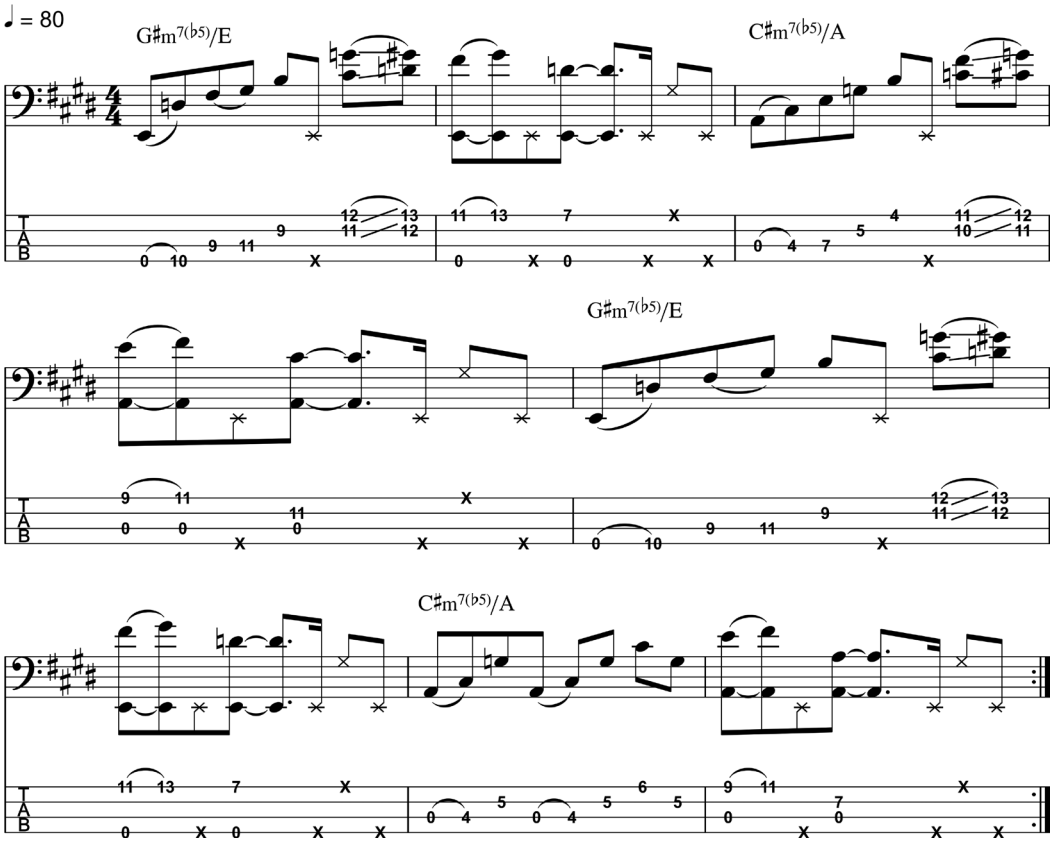
Example 2

Continuing to develop our percussive approach to chord medley, notice that in the first two bars of each system of Example 2, a conventional E7 chord has been employed to produce the initial motif. In the subsequent measures of each instance, a Min7th (♭5) has then subsequently been employed to generate a melodic alteration. The percussive array of dead notes found on beats two and four of each bar portray a simple drum pattern. Try only to use the thumb and index finger of your plucking hand when playing them – remembering that these are percussive motifs to be played fingerstyle. Resist the urge to slap!



Example 3

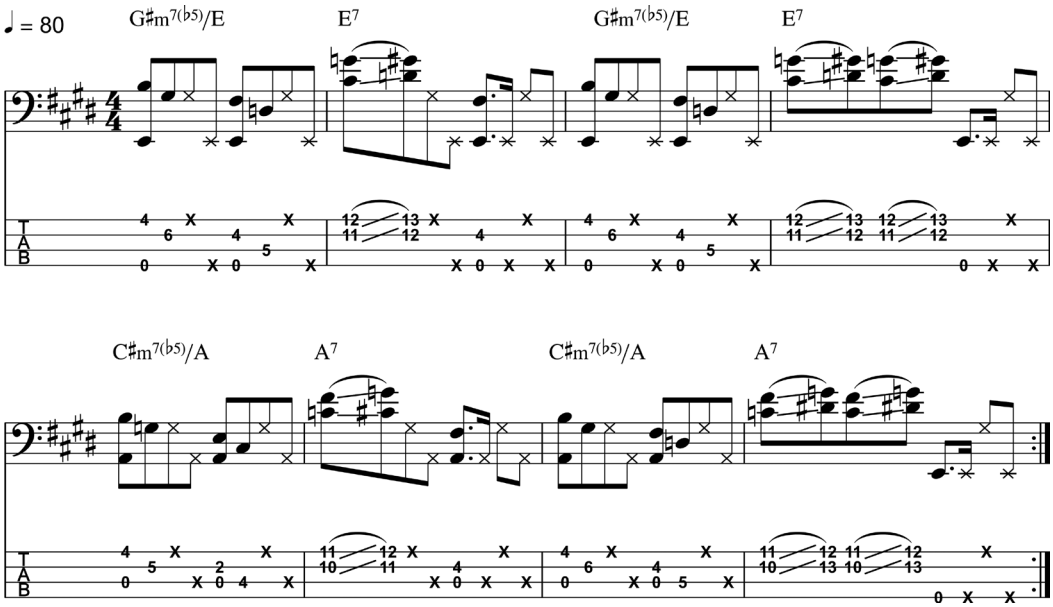
Let's emphasise the use of subordinate substitutions in Example 3, which comprises the concept from the very first note. Instead of accessing Dom 7th vocabulary in a conventional manner, referencing the root, you'll be asked to switch to the Min7th (♭5) alternative position. The resulting melodic texture may seem a little alien at first, but that's the point – it's a fresh makeover for tried-and-tested perceptions. Look out for the sliding double stops in the first, third and fifth bars. To execute these proficiently, play the lower note with the index finger of your fretting hand and the higher one with your middle finger.



"THE MELODIC TEXTURE MAY SEEM A LITTLE ALIEN AT FIRST, BUT THAT'S THE POINT – IT'S A FRESH MAKEOVER FOR TRIED AND TESTED PERCEPTIONS"

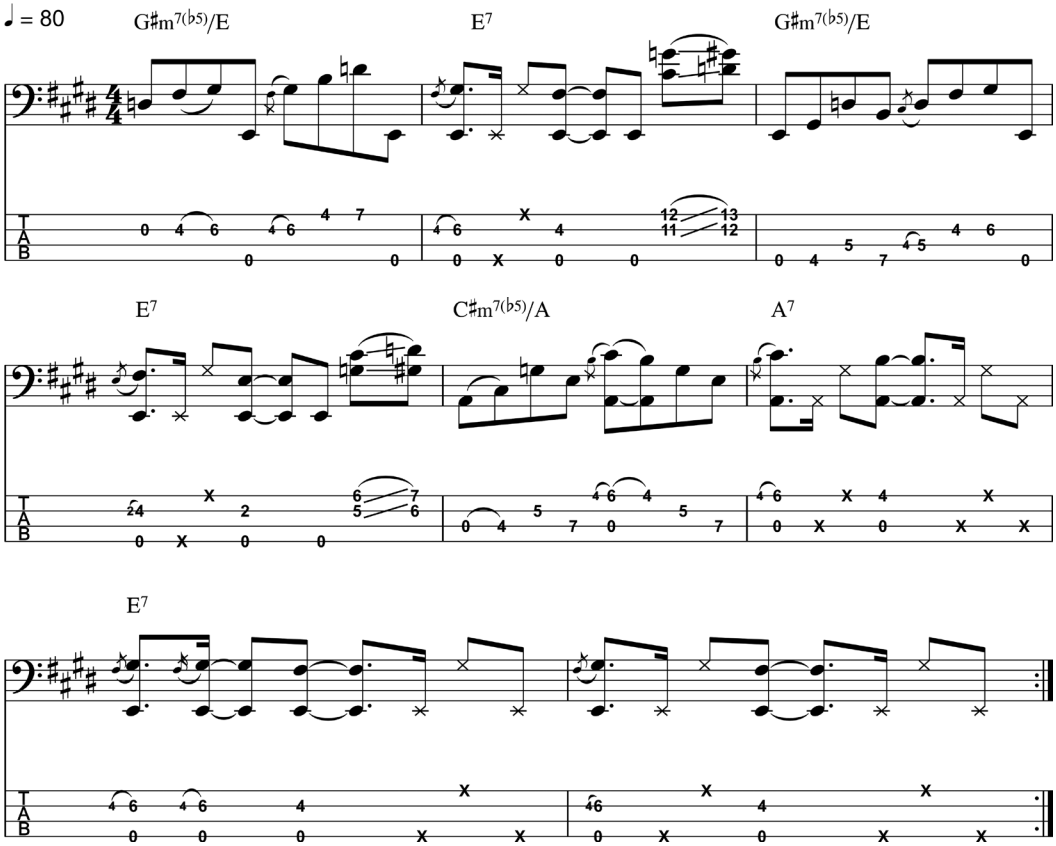
Example 4

Example 4 utilises the tonal centres of E and A, but alternates their harmonic content with the subordinate slash chords combined with regular root position voicings. First, you'll be asked to interchange G♯Min7th (♭5) vocabulary with double stop harmony in a more rudimentary E7 structure. Overall, the composition is quite straightforward: pay particular attention to the notation, as a number of the melodic phrases have the ability to trip you up.



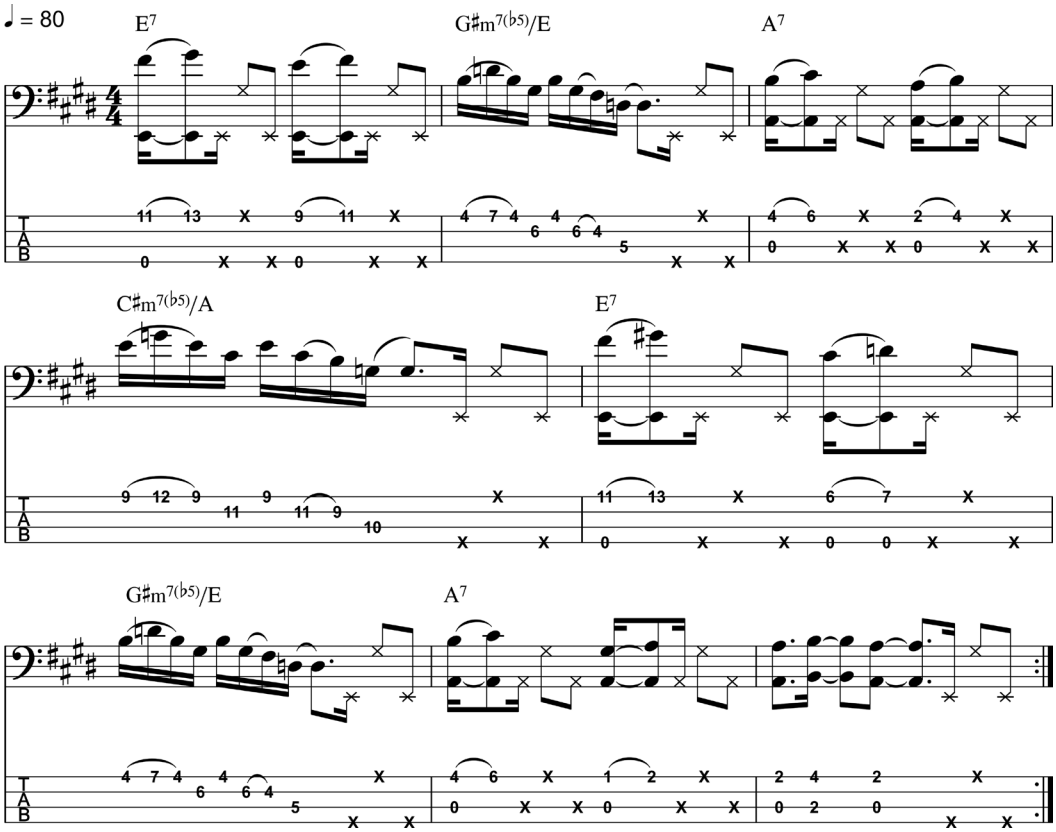
Example 5

Despite a number of fresh motifs, Example 5 remains faithful to the preceding chord progression. However, you'll notice that the example focuses more acutely on the chord tones associated with the Min7th (♭5) arpeggio. An open string precedes each melodic example that contains the arpeggio. Hopefully, this should gain you sufficient time to reposition your fretting hand in preparation for the succeeding motif. Maintain accurate placement of those percussive dead notes.



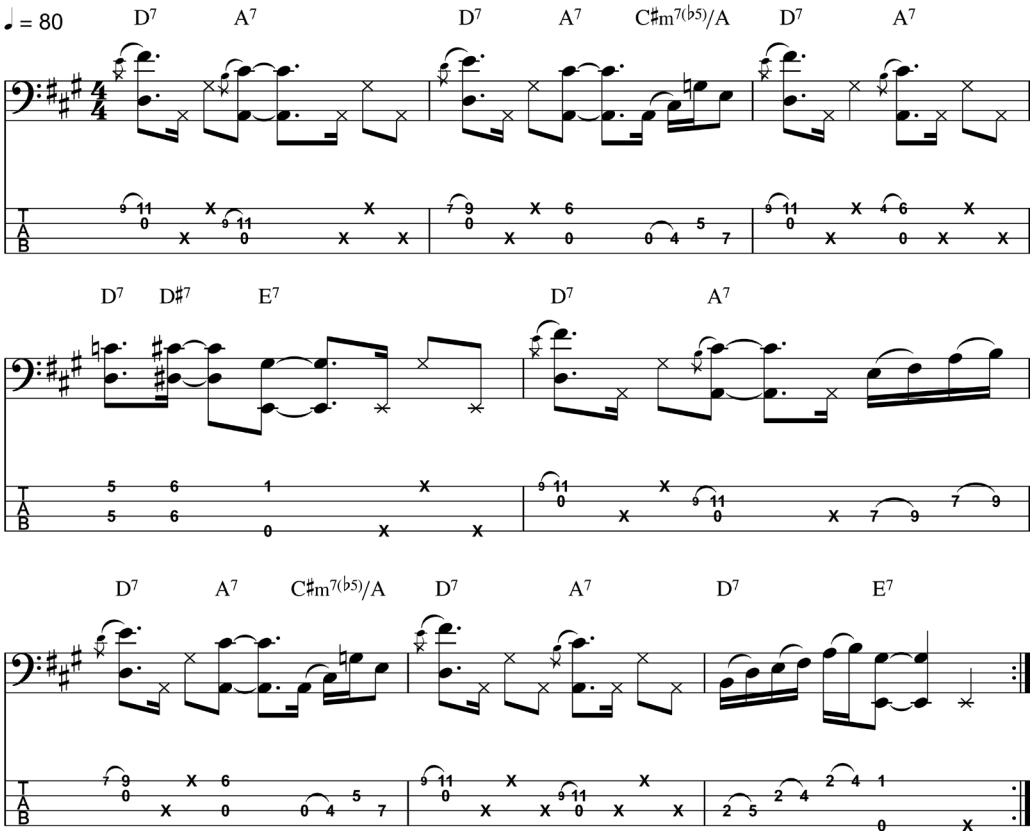
Example 6

In the second measure of Example 6, you'll see a rather intricate 16th note passage. This motif is comprised entirely of the G♯Min7th (♭5) chord tones. The position of your fretting hand is critical here, as any misplacement will inhibit the execution. Plant your index finger on the B on fret four of string one: this will allow the subsequent hammer-on and pull-off patterns to be executed with your little finger; you'll also find that the remaining notes nestle neatly under your remaining digits.



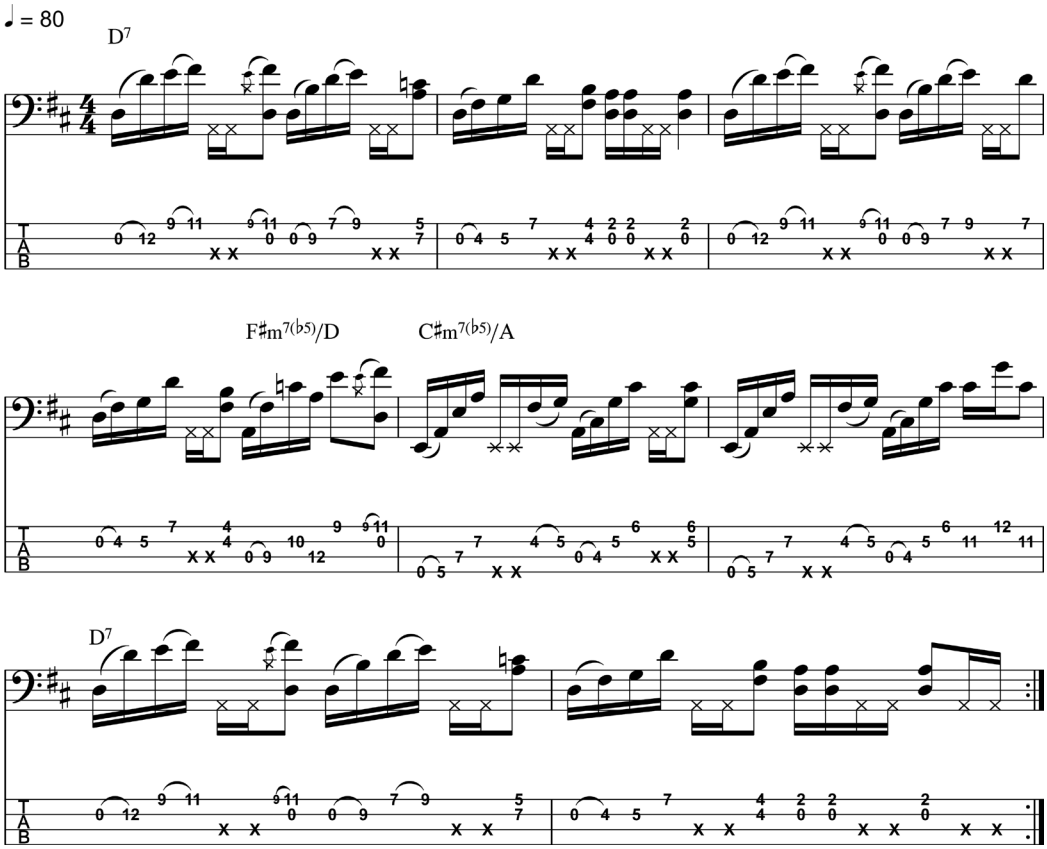
Example 7

This month's penultimate exercise is primarily a catchy, Dominant 7th groove, filled with a number of subordinate substitutes and quirky twists. The first is a chromatic movement in bar four, where you'll find Dominant 7th chords ascending in semitones between the IV7 and V7 structures. It's actually quite straightforward to execute, as the chords only consist of root and 7th intervals as double stops. During bars five and eight you'll also encounter some lovely ascending 16th notes. In both instances the phrases come from pentatonic scales, so they shouldn't prove too difficult.



Example 8

This month's final exercise introduces a technique that is not dissimilar to double thumbing. In these eight bars, you'll sporadically encounter two paired 16th notes. As in the previous exercises, these rhythmic figures enrich the percussive elements of the composition. However, in this instance the execution is varied: the initial 16th note is played by striking the muted A string, while the subsequent 16th note is produced by plucking the fundamental once more – the muting remains constant for both. Subordinate substitutes have once again been employed to create a contracting melodic theme to the initial motif, with a Victor Wooten-inspired open-hammer technique on the first beat of each measure. Stay healthy, and I'll see you next month.



STUART CLAYTON

Advanced Tutorial

Feeling like giving something a mighty slap? You've come to the right place, says Stu Clayton

Welcome back to my new series on advanced slap bass techniques. Over the past two issues we've been examining the use of fretting hand slaps, initially from open strings, then from fretted notes. We're going to move on to a new technique in this instalment, but one that is a natural extension of the fretting hand slap – the 'machine gun triplet'. Though they are perfectly safe in the right hands, they should nevertheless be used with extreme care!

A machine gun triplet is essentially a blur of notes performed with various different combinations of slapped notes, popped notes and fretting hand slaps. They have been used by many bass players over the years but are probably most synonymous with Mark King of Level 42. You should make a point of checking out tracks such as 'Love Games' and live versions of 'Mr. Pink' and '88', while other players who have used the machine gun triplet include Stuart Hamm, Marcus Miller, P-Nut and Pascal Mulot.

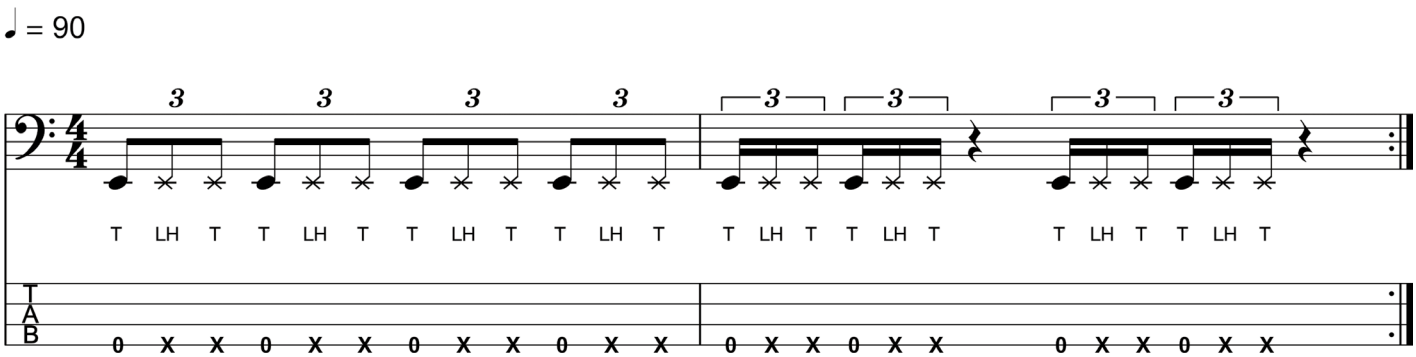
As the name suggests, machine gun triplets go by very quickly, such as with any bass technique that outputs a rapid volley of notes, the key to success lies within the interplay between the two hands. With that in mind, the first few exercises that we'll cover here are picking/fretting hand co-ordination exercises that you'll need to get comfortable with before moving on to anything more adventurous.

Note that in the slap guides for these exercises, fretting hand slaps are notated with the letters 'LH', meaning Left Hand. This is a long-standing slap bass naming convention but is a little unfair on the left-handed bassists out there as the direction is more accurately for the fretting hand. In all text descriptions I will refer to the hands as 'picking hand' or 'fretting hand'.

MACHINE GUN TRIPLET PATTERN #1

Two different fretting hand/picking hand patterns are commonly used to play machine gun triplets. In the first, the thumb leads and is followed by a ghost note, which is slapped with the fretting hand. This is then followed by a second thumb slap.

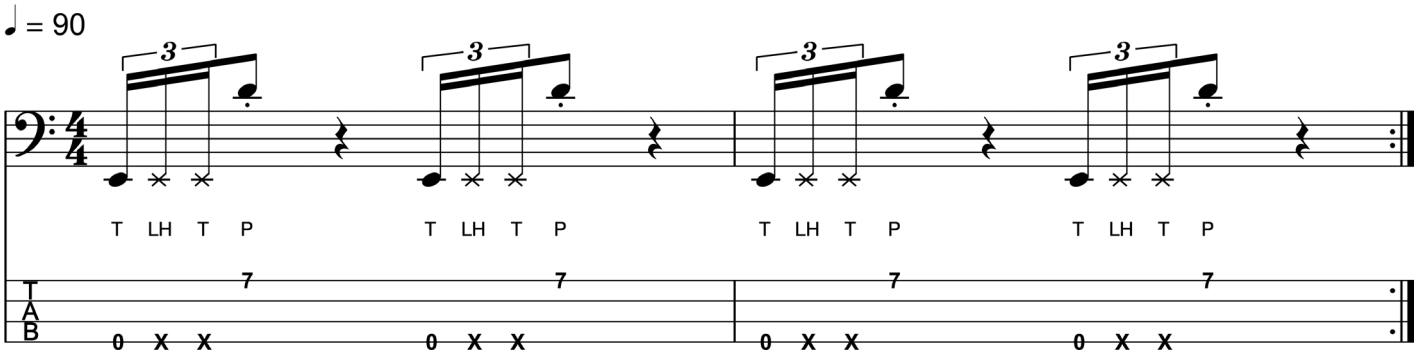
Example 1



This exercise consists of triplets played using the machine gun triplet pattern described above. It starts with eighth note triplets in the first bar, and then doubles up to sixteenth note triplets in the second. Note that in the second bar, rests have been used to break up what would otherwise be a very relentless two-hand pattern. This exercise may not sound particularly interesting, but it will get your hands accustomed to the technique. Work on this exercise slowly to begin with, and don't be tempted to rush it. It would be a good idea to play it out of time until you have it under your fingers. A popped note often follows this three-note figure.

The next exercise will incorporate this variation.

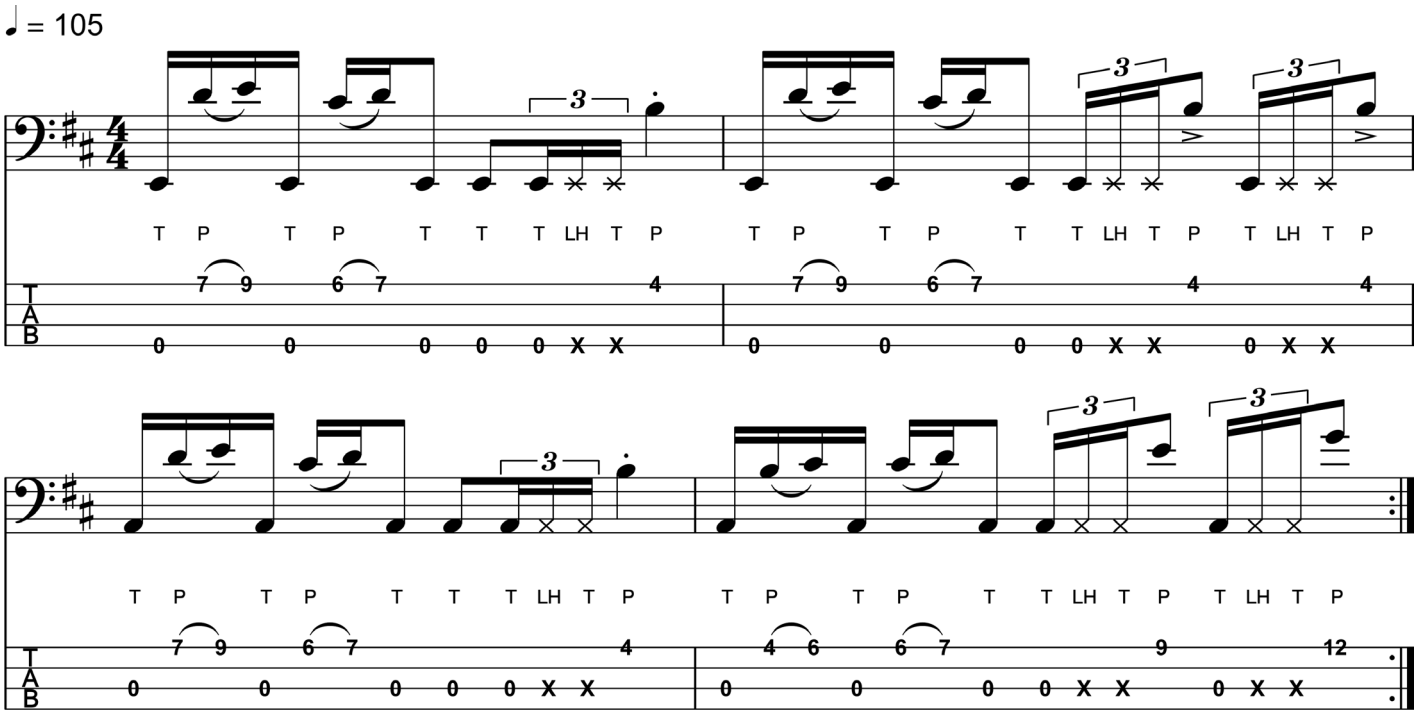
Example 2



This is another purely mechanical exercise that is designed to allow you practise the triplet motif followed by a popped note. 16th note triplets have been used here, but the suggested tempo is quite slow. Don't move on to the next exercises until the hand co-ordination in this exercise and the previous one feels completely natural.

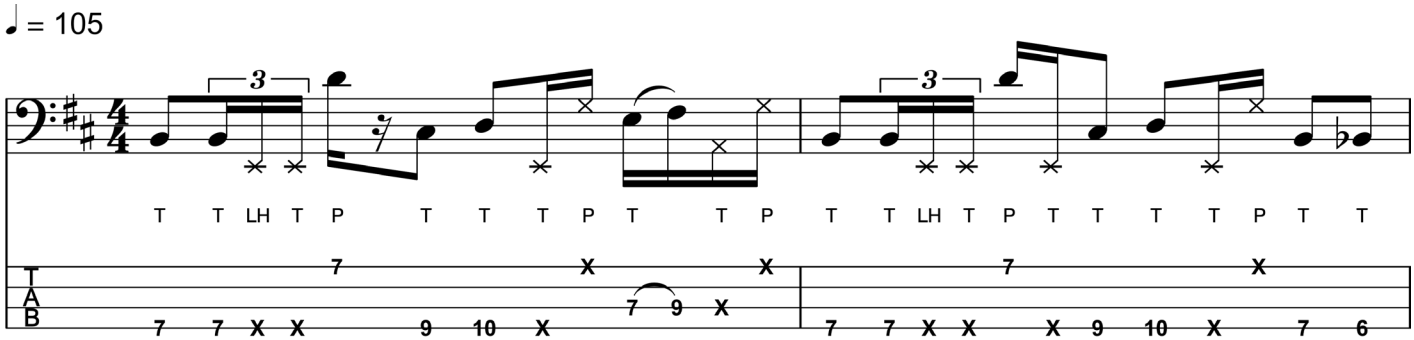
Let's now look at some exercises that put this first machine gun triplet pattern to use.

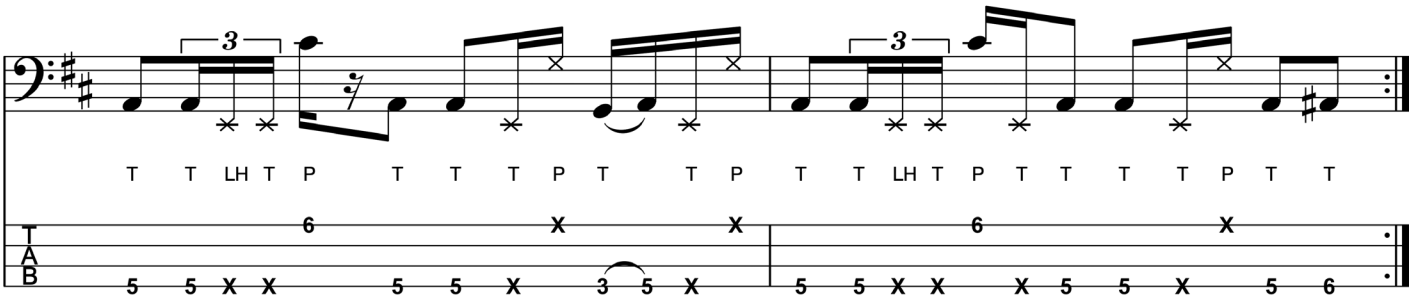
Example 3



This exercise is a funk groove based on the E Dorian mode. Open keys such as E and A are ideal for machine gun triplets since the open strings make excellent 'jumping off' points. Try to keep the open strings ringing beneath the popped notes in the first two beats of each bar.

Example 4



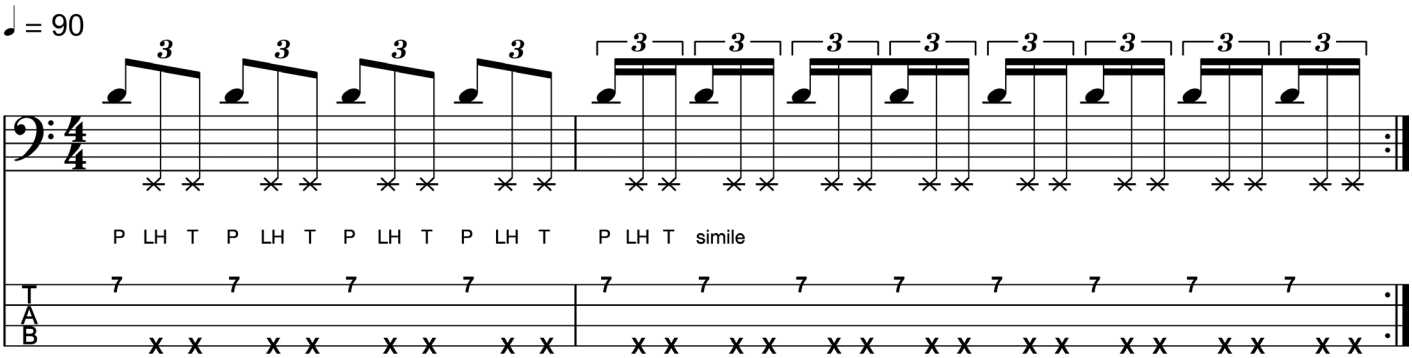


While these triplet figures work well in open keys, that is not to say they can't be used in any key. This exercise features machine gun triplets that begin from fretted notes. The technique used to play them is exactly the same. It is recommended that you use your first finger to fret the pitched notes of the triplet, and also for the popped note immediately after. You'll have to jump it from the E-string to the G, but you should find this is the easiest fingering for the exercise.

MACHINE GUN TRIPLET PATTERN #2

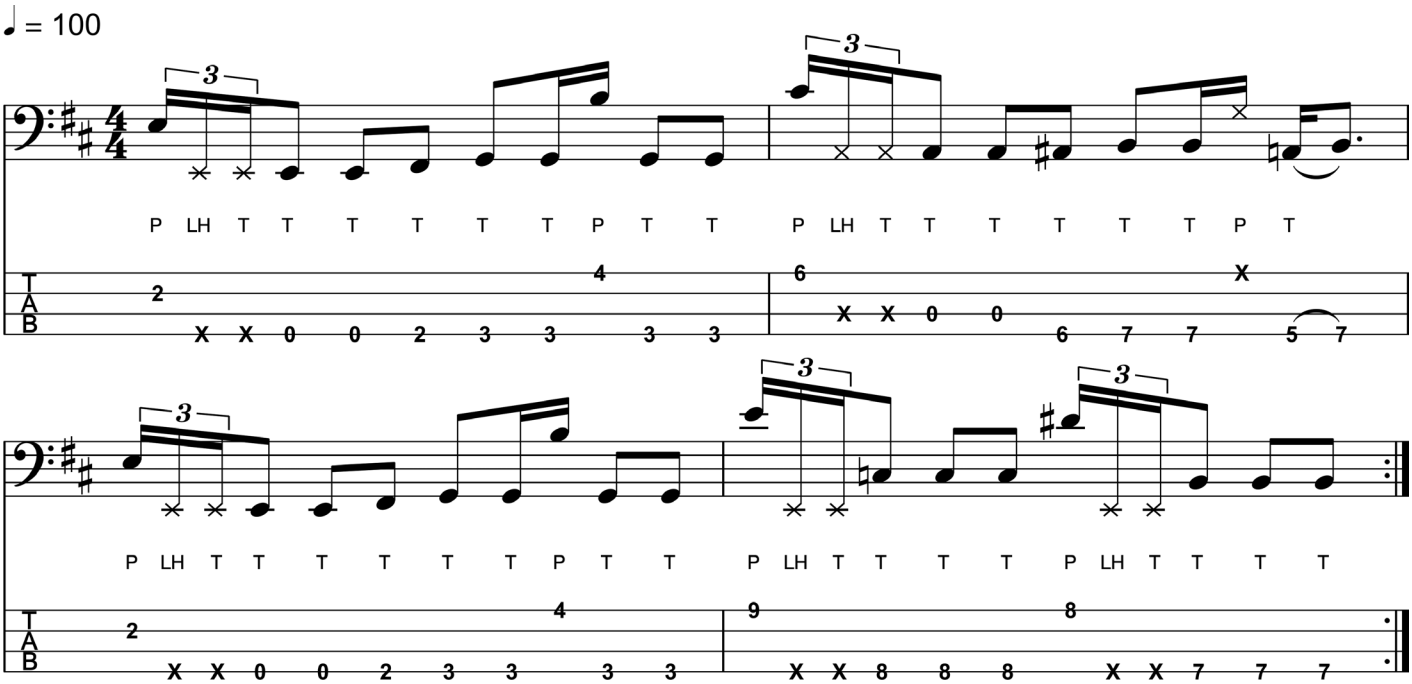
The second method for playing machine gun triplets starts with a popped note. This is then followed by a fretting hand slap, followed by a thumb slap.

Example 5



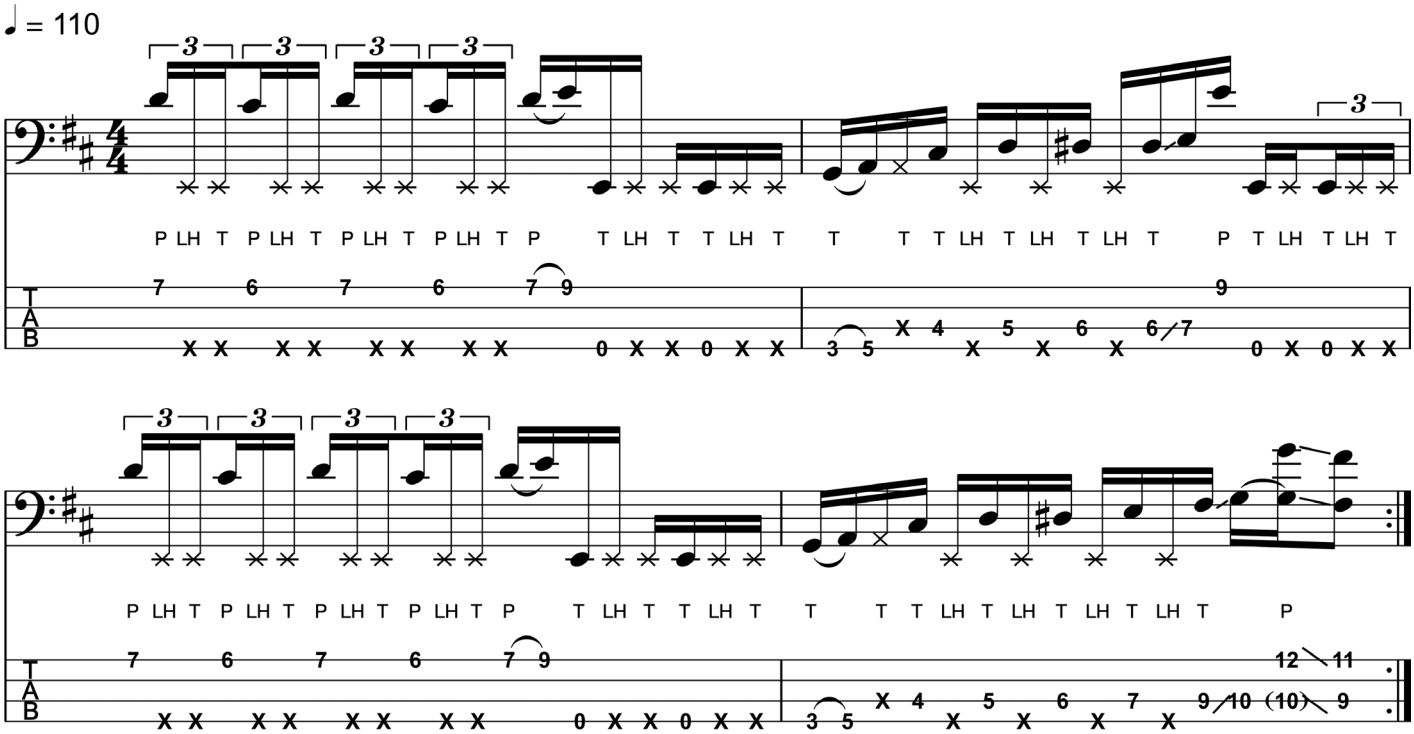
This exercise illustrates the second machine gun triplet pattern initially as eighth note triplets, then as 16th note triplets. As with the previous pattern, you should practise this pattern out of time until you have mastered the fretting/picking hand coordination. Once it feels natural, try playing it along with the audio track or with a metronome. We'll now put this second pattern to work in some grooves.

Example 6



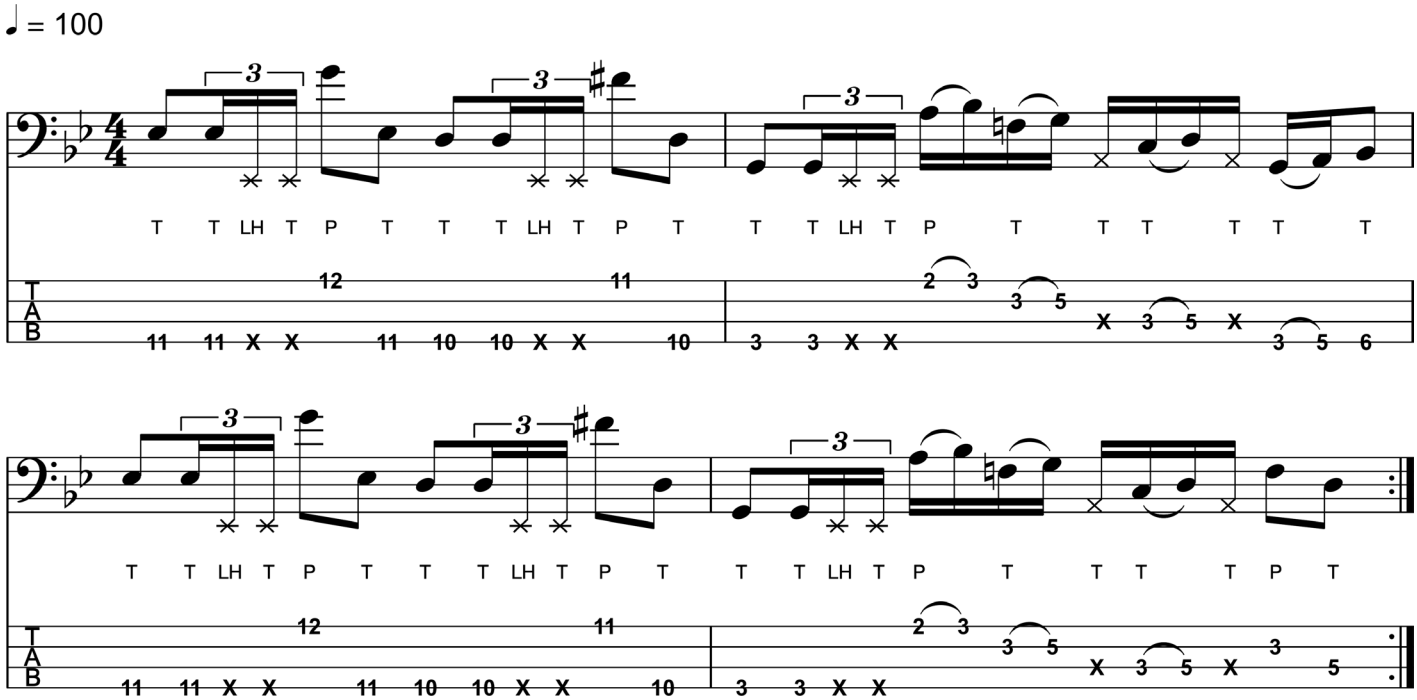
This exercise features the second machine gun triplet figure on the first beat of every bar. It acts as an interesting rhythmic figure that gives the line some lift each time it comes around. Note that several tenths have also been used in this line to reinforce the chord progression.

Example 7



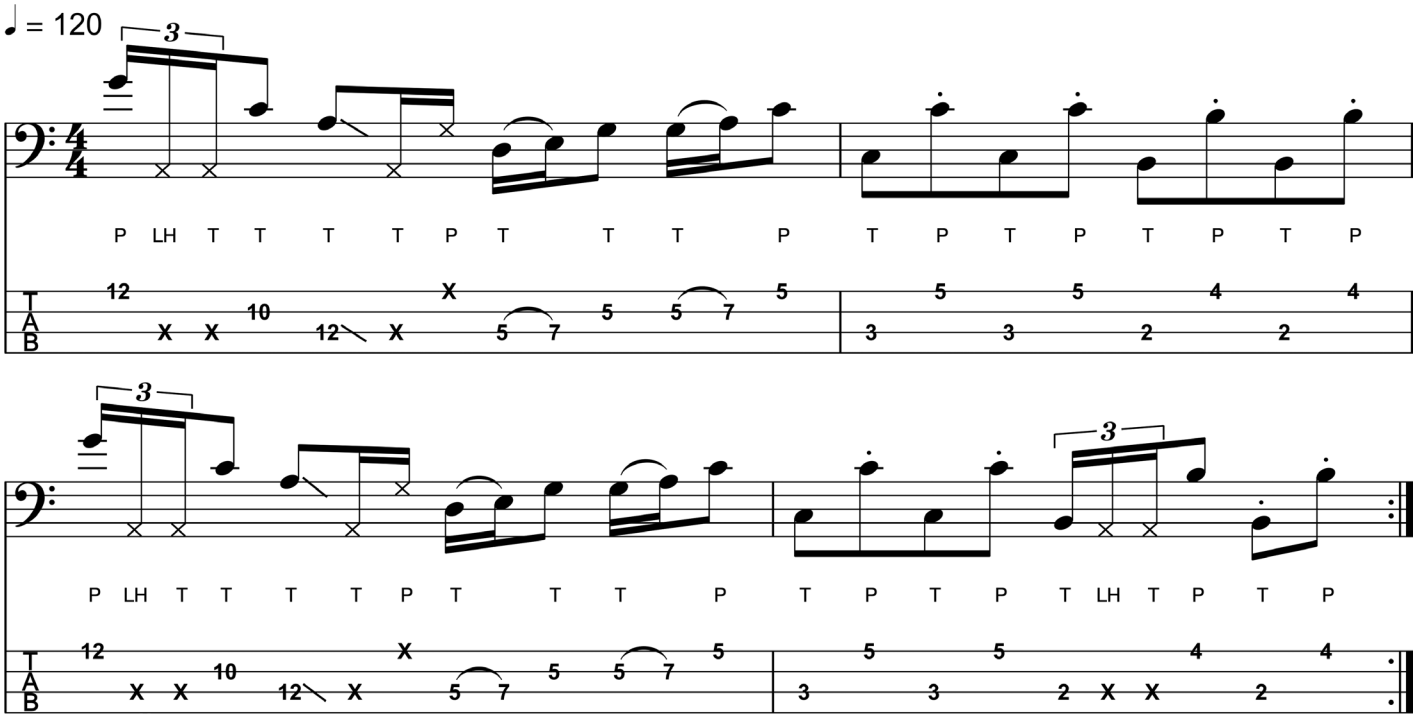
This exercise is a complex sixteenth note line that features a barrage of machine gun triplets on the first two beats of the first and third bars. The sliding figure on the last beat of the fourth bar is played by slapping the F♯, sliding up to the G, popping the G an octave above while allowing the lower G to continue ringing, then sliding both notes down to the F♯s at the ninth and eleventh frets. This line is another lick that is reminiscent of Mark King's playing.

Example 8



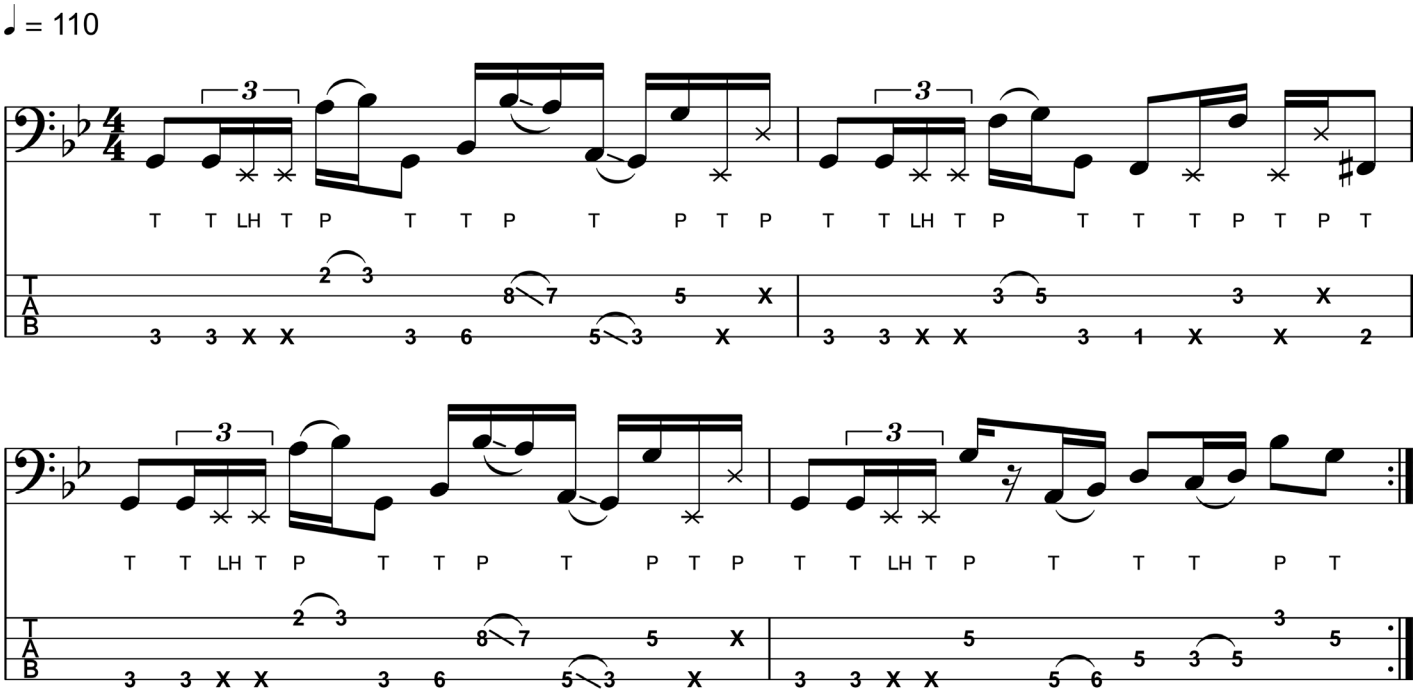
This line features machine gun triplets that follow fretted notes. For the figure in the second bar the recommended fingering would be to fret the low G with your second finger. This will allow you to play the hammer-on from the A to the B♭ on the G-string with your first and second fingers. Remember, the first finger will need to jump across from fretting a note on the E-string, to one on the G-string.

Example 9



This exercise features both of the machine gun triplet patterns that we've covered in this issue. The first leads with a pop and occurs at the beginning of the first and third bars. These are used to add rhythmic lift to the line. The second begins with the thumb and occurs in the fourth bar. Note the use of staccato notes in the second and fourth bars; these lend the line a disco feel that is reminiscent of Stuart Zender's playing on the Jamiroquai track 'Emergency On Planet Earth'.

Example 10



This exercise makes use of the first triplet pattern that we covered. You will need to be adept at playing these triplets from fretted notes, as this line is in the key of G minor – not an open string in sight! A lot of notes went by in these exercises, and once again I want to point out that this is very much a technique that should be used sparingly. If you're comfortable with fretting hand slaps you should find these lines relatively straightforward to get together, but as with all technical exercises you should work through them slowly, out of time to begin with. Your hands will need to practise the required co-ordination before you can play them up to tempo.

That's it for this month. See you next time for more slap bass mayhem, and look after yourselves.

THE LAST NOTE

The great Dan Veall, a veteran of the low frequencies, signs off each issue of this magazine with a subject close to all our hearts, and essential tips about how to do it right. This month: pitch pedals

Hello, again! I hope you're staying healthy? Let's traverse the aural delights of another effect type – pitch pedals – and see how we can use them to create effective bass sounds.

So what's pitch shifting? Well, it's taking an audio signal and, using either analogue electronics or digital algorithms, producing a new pitch. This could be a single note or multiple intervals generated at the same time. Purely analogue electronics manipulate the audio signal directly with no conversion into the digital domain, while DSP (Digital Signal Processing) uses algorithms – a bit like running a program on a computer – to recreate effects such as pitchshifting among others. They both have their advantages and limitations, so don't disregard one over the other.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. WHAT DIFFERENT KINDS OF PITCH SHIFTERS ARE THERE?

Octave This effect creates intervals that are, as the name suggests, whole octave intervals from the source pitch. It's perfect for mild thickening of your bass tone or creating big rumbling synth sounds. If you're a fretless player, then chorus and analogue octave are the effects to grab. If you're a fan of Pearl Jam, why not try a one-up, one-down octave mix to get that 12-string chime?

'Drop tune' pedals Some of us bring extra basses out to gigs for songs where the instrument's tuning is dropped by whole intervals. One way to avoid this is to use a polyphonic pitch shifter to effect this change electronically. Some pedals do a fairly good job of this, but there's a limit to how low they will track bass notes. Try before you buy.

Intelligent harmonisers These use complicated DSP algorithms to create pitch adjustments ranging from the mildest of chorusing effects to full-on multi-part harmonies. To do this, the processor needs a certain amount of external intervention. For example, to play the right notes in a harmony, the processor needs to have the correct scale or key selected.

Whammy Guitarists such as Pantera's 'Dimebag' Darrell and Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello are notable users of whammy, an effect where pitch is controlled by manipulating a pedal. These can lead to dive-bomb effects where a detune goes beyond two octaves down – and there's no reason why bassists can't share the fun, at least down to the limits of human hearing.

Pitch shifting delays These are delay effects, whose pitches arpeggiate as they repeat. An example of combining other effects blocks with pitch shifting in DSP offering limitless possibilities.

OKAY, I'VE GOT A PEDAL. WHAT THE HELL DO ALL THOSE KNOBS DO?

Brands often give their parameter knobs snazzy names, but essentially, these are the controls you can expect to find on most modern pedals.

Level Simply the overall level of the pedal, allowing you to adjust the volume.

Voice 1/2/3 Pitch shifters often have more than one 'voice' process. You can make one more prominent than others, or turn one off completely.

Blend A blend (or Effect Level) knob will mix between your effects and your unaffected signal.

Key/Scale/Harmony Selecting the key or scale that the harmoniser uses.

Pitch shift The increments of pitch are often labelled on a dial, usually offering enough positions for two octaves of semitone shifting.

Detune shift Not all shifting has to be in defined note intervals. Adding a subtle detune can create some interesting chorus-like effects. It can lift a bass tone, too, especially if the detune only acts on the upper harmonics of your bass notes.

DAN RECOMMENDS!

Pitch shifters and harmonisers can either process single notes (monophonic) or clusters of notes at the same time (polyphonic). There are advantages and limitations to each type. Personally, I suggest you try an analogue octave favouring the 'one octave down' sound.

Follow this with a gated fuzz, set to chop off your note decay sharply. Have that plugged into your filter pedal(s) of choice and play high up the bass neck. This is great for making your bass sound like a synth!

Thanks for reading! Each of my columns will give you some ideas of your own — and remember, there are no rules, so do experiment and let me know how you get on. If you've got a question for me, find me on social media as @DanVeallBassist.

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